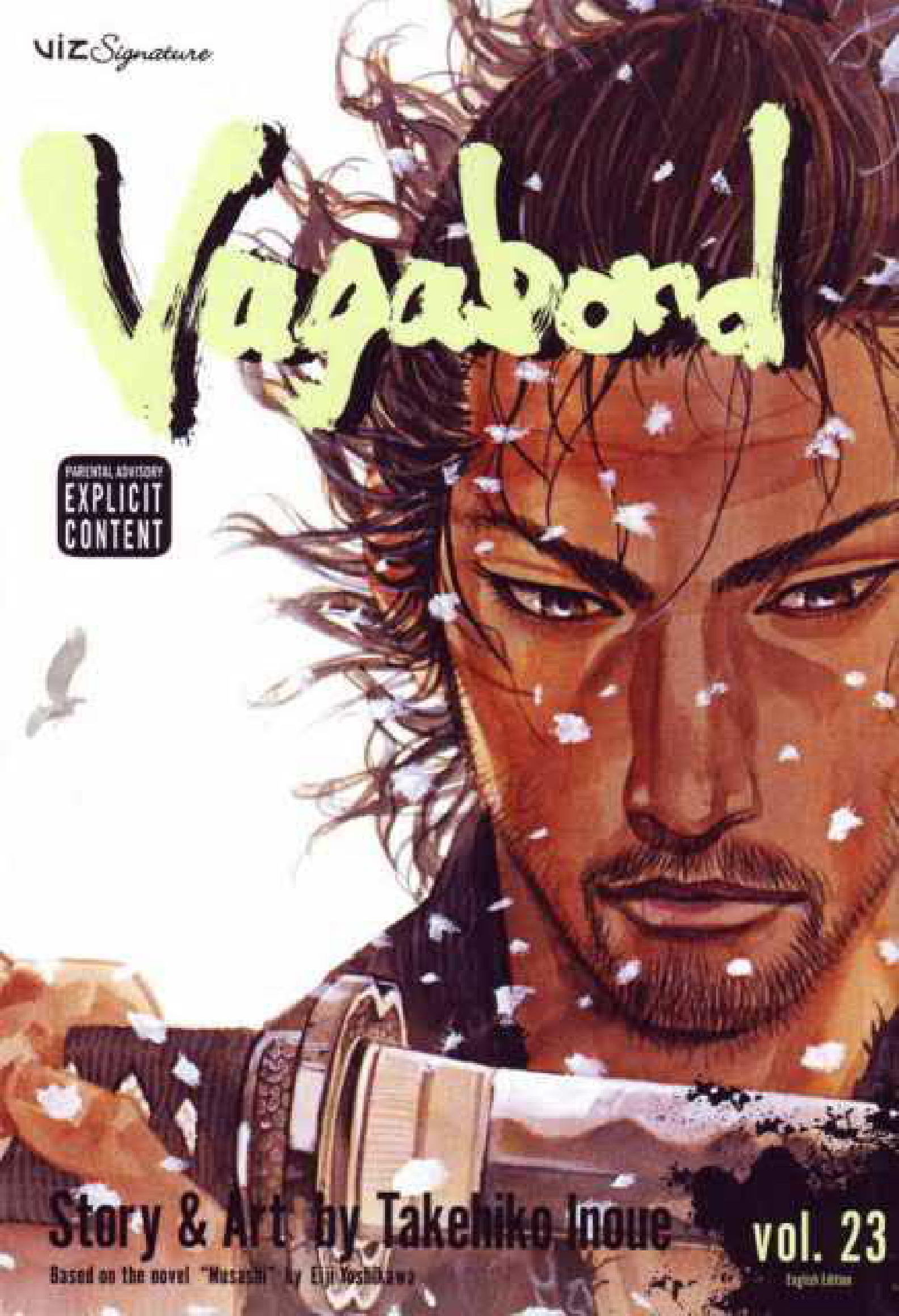
VIZ Signature

Vagabond

PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT



Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 23

English Edition

viz Signature
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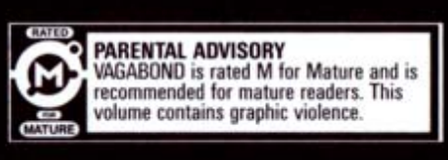


Vagabond

vol. 23

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

THE REAL KOJIRŌ ...!?

#198 Grass, Snow and Blood

AHHH...

HEY...
ARE YOU SASAKI KOJIRŌ?

CAN YOU HEAR ME?
YOU DEAF ...?

FWOOSH

AUH.

BRR
BRR
BRR

TUGG

F
W
O
O
S
H

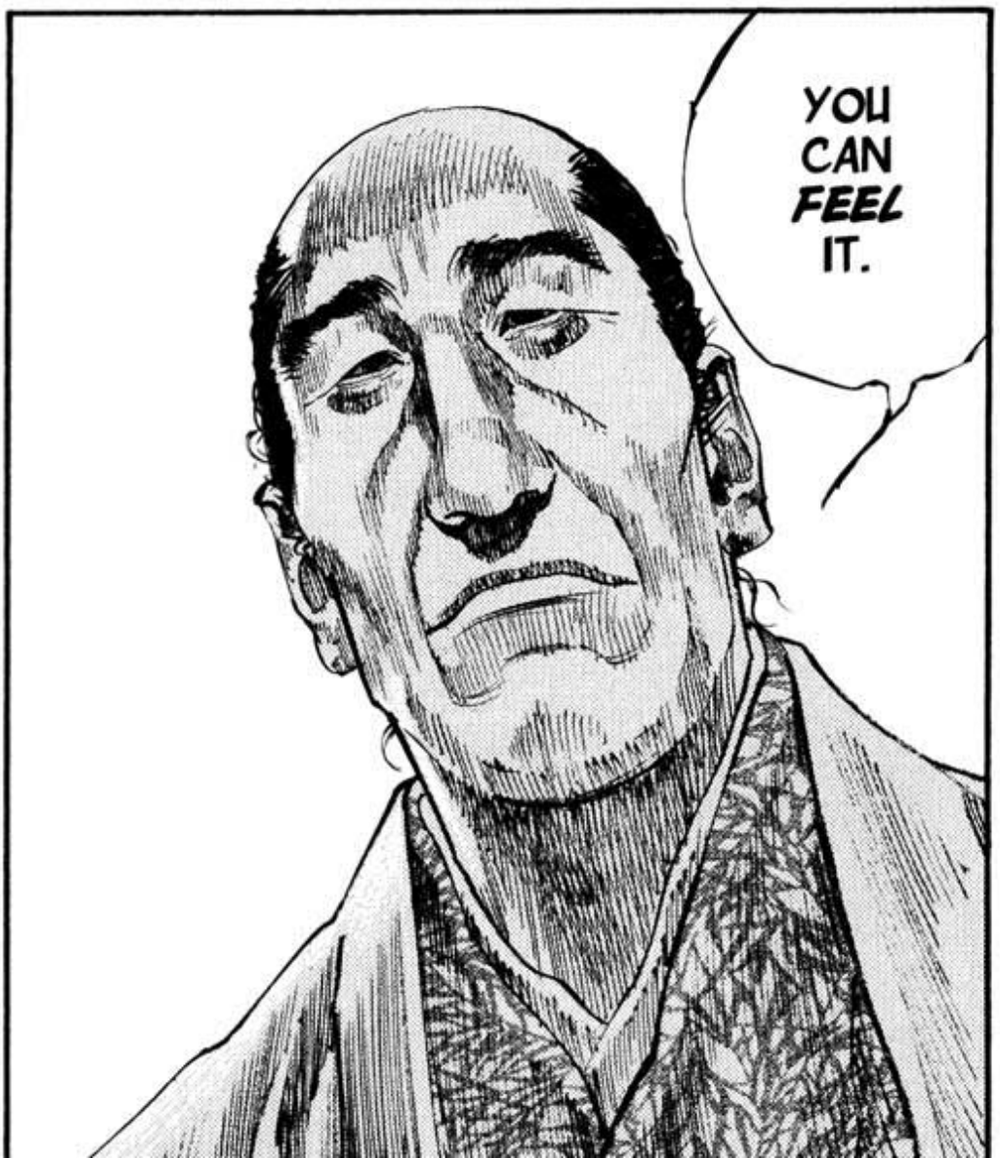
DENSHICHIRŌ SENSEI MAY BE HONEST TO A FAULT, BUT HE SHOULD NOT PARTAKE IN THIS DUEL.
AND WE SHOULD HAVE SASAKI KOJIRŌ FIGHT IN HIS STEAD.

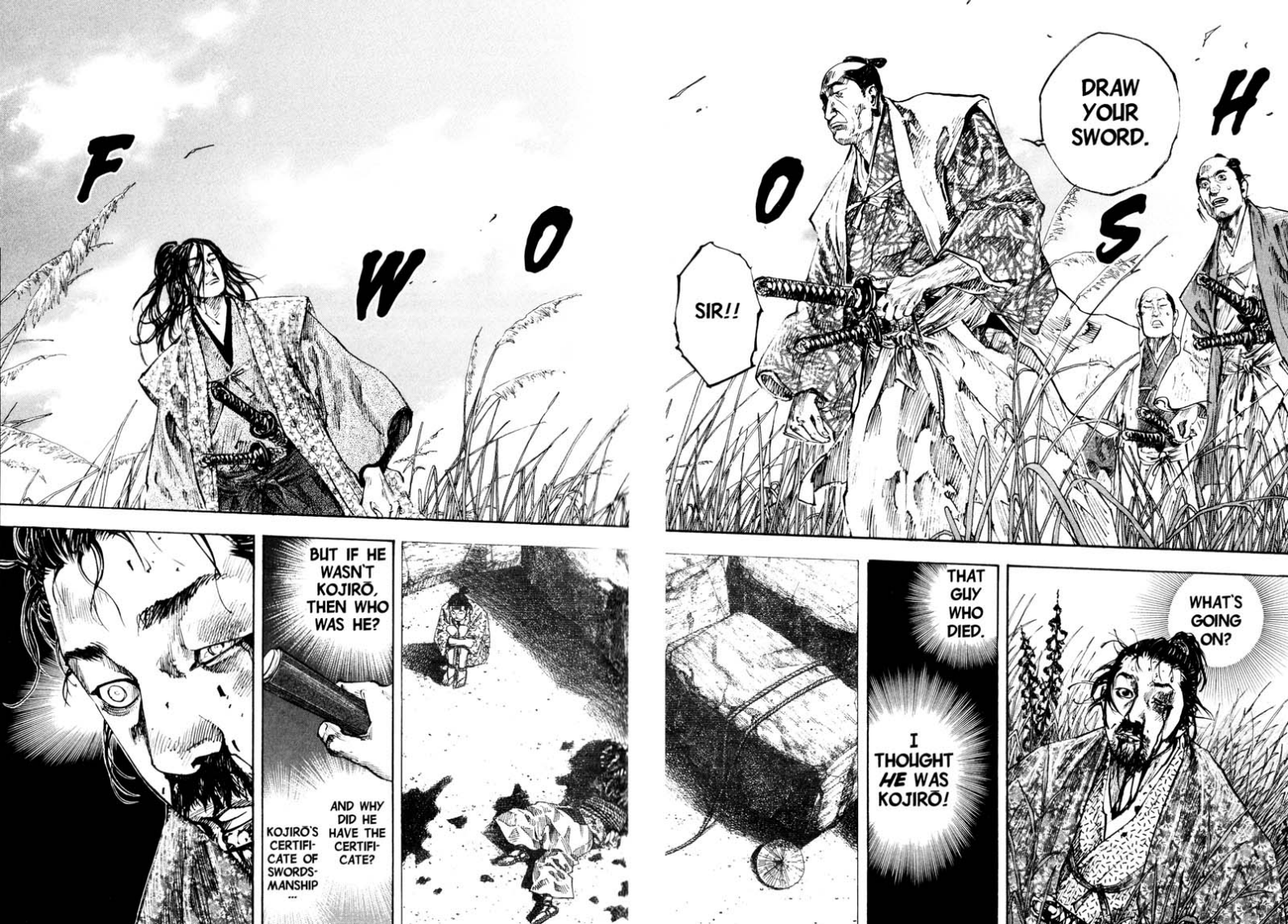
SO YOU'RE SAYING ...
...THERE'S NO POINT FOR THE HEAD OF OUR SCHOOL TO FIGHT A LONE RŌNIN.
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE GAINED FROM SUCH A VICTORY.

?!
I'M SORRY, KURANDO. I NEVER TOLD ANYONE ABOUT THIS.
SO THIS KOJIRŌ...
TUNK
THUNK
IS HE A FORMIDABLE FIGHTER, UEDA?
HE FOUGHT DENSHICHIRŌ FOUR YEARS AGO.
BUT ON THAT OCCASION, DENSHICHIRŌ WAS BEATEN NEAR TO DEATH.
!!

...
WHY AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF US?
.....
WHAT INSOLENCE ...
SIR MIIKE ...
HE'S TALL...
...AND DEAF.
IF HE REALLY IS KOJIRŌ...
BUT THAT DOESN'T COMPLETELY PROVE HE'S KOJIRŌ.
...THEN HE MUST BE AS SKILLED IN THE WAY OF THE SWORD AS DENSHICHIRŌ SENSEI.
SIR!
WE WERE INSTRUCTED TO INVITE KOJIRŌ BACK AS OUR GUEST!
YOU MUSTN'T FIGHT HIM HERE...
I KNOW. THIS WON'T COME TO BLOWS.
YOU DON'T NEED TO ACTUALLY FIGHT SOME-ONE...
...TO MEASURE HIS STRENGTH.

WHAT'S WITH THOSE EYES?


YOU CAN *FEEL* IT.


FWOOSH
DRAW YOUR SWORD.
SIR!!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
THAT GUY WHO DIED.
I THOUGHT HE WAS KOJIRŌ!
BUT IF HE WASN'T KOJIRŌ, THEN WHO WAS HE?
AND WHY DID HE HAVE THE CERTIFICATE?
KOJIRŌ'S CERTIFICATE OF SWORDSMANSHIP ...

PLE--
PLEASE...
...!!
"PLEASE..."

I WAS SUPPOSED TO DELIVER IT TO KOJIRŌ...
...
GLANCE

THAT SAMURAI HAS BEEN WATCHING ME. THIS WHOLE TIME.

I UNDERSTAND NOW.
I'M SO ASHAMED.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO BEAR.
SO I FINALLY MEET YOU...

THE
REAL
SASAKI
KOJIRŌ.

I'VE ENCOUN-TERED MANY FIGHTERS MIGHTIER THAN ME. I KNOW HOW IT FEELS.
DON'T WORRY. I WON'T DRAW MY BLADE.
SIR MIIKE!
I'M NEITHER THAT YOUNG NOR STUPID.
I'LL APOLOGIZE AND GRACIOUSLY INVITE HIM BACK TO OUR SCHOOL.
THE MOMENT I SENSE THAT HIS SKILL IS GREATER THAN MINE, I'LL GET DOWN ON MY KNEES...
...I WON'T DRAW MY SWORD. I...
JUST...
...WANT TO GAUGE HIS SKILL...

WANT TO SEE HOW STRONG THIS MAN IS.

AUHH...

...
MAKE HIM PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO ME.
CUT HIM DOWN, KOJIRŌ!
SIR!
YOUR SWORD, YOU'VE DRAWN IT!
NEED TO GET DOWN ON MY KNEES.
MUST STOP.

HE'S STRONG.
BUT EXACTLY HOW STRONG IS HE...?

I MUST FIND OUT.
IT'S AS IF...
...THIS HAS BEEN THE SOLE PURPOSE ...
...OF MY ENTIRE LIFE.
THUNK

!?
...!?
!!
PLIPP
PLIPP
PLIPP

...
FWUMP

Vagabond

#199 | Kojirō and Matahachi

UEDA!
THOK
!!
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING !?
A SUBSTI-TUTE!?
DAMN YOU!
THWAK
PUNK

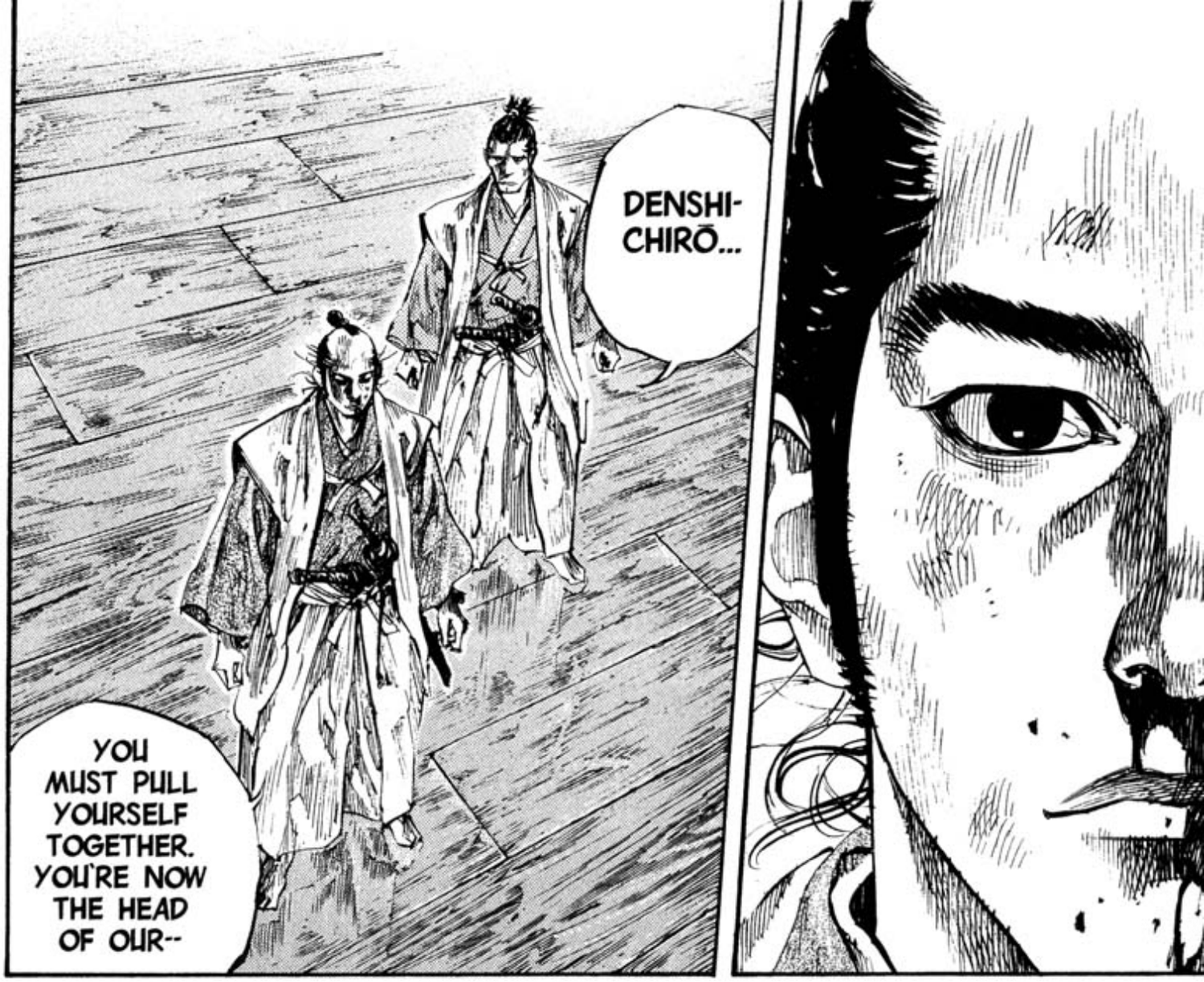
THWMP
SHUT UP!!
DENSHI-CHIRŌ SENSEI!!
DENSHI-CHIRŌ!
THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO FIGHT!!
HUF
HUF
HUF
WHAT!?
YOU'RE NOW THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL!
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN BY WINNING, AND YOU RISK EVERYTHING IF YOU ARE DEFEATED.
YOU MUSTN'T ENGAGE IN THIS FIGHT.
WE'LL FIND SOMEONE TO FIGHT IN YOUR STEAD.
I'M NOT GOOD AT KEEPING TRACK OF RISKS AND GAINS.
I WILL KEEP THE PROMISE I MADE WITH MUSASHI ONE YEAR AGO.
HUF
HUF
HUF
THAT'S REASON ENOUGH FOR ME TO FIGHT!!

THUD
THUD
THNK
...
BASH

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
UEDA.
YOU'RE DOING THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT I NEED FROM YOU.
KURANDO.

JUST TELL ME...

HUF
HUF
HUF
.....
TELL ME THAT YOU BELIEVE IN ME.


DENSHI-
CHIRŌ...
YOU MUST PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER. YOU'RE NOW THE HEAD OF OUR--

...?
DEN...?

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

...
YOU'RE BURNING UP!
DENSHI-CHIRŌ...
HUF
DENSHICHIRŌ!
HUF
HUF
HUF
I-I'M OKAY...
YOU NEED TO REST.
COME, LET US RETURN TO THE ESTATE.
...

...
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!!
I...

...BUT KOJIRŌ USED THE *DEGOTE* TECHNIQUE TO GET THE INSIDE SWING.
KOJIRŌ'S BLADE WENT THROUGH MIIKE'S ARM...
MIIKE WAS ABOUT TO STRIKE DOWN TOWARDS HIS OPPONENT'S HEAD...
NO... I SAW MIIKE IN MID-SWING...
DI-DID YOU SEE THAT?
PERHAPS THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED ...
AND NOW...
.....
BUT I DIDN'T REALLY SEE IT HAPPEN. IT JUST LOOKED LIKE THEY WENT CRASHING INTO EACH OTHER.
...AND CUT CLEAN THROUGH HIS TORSO.
.....
UM... SASAKI, SIR!
HE CAN'T HEAR US...
HUF
HUF
YES, WE MUST BRING HIM BACK.
...KOJIRŌ MUST STILL BE OUR GUEST.

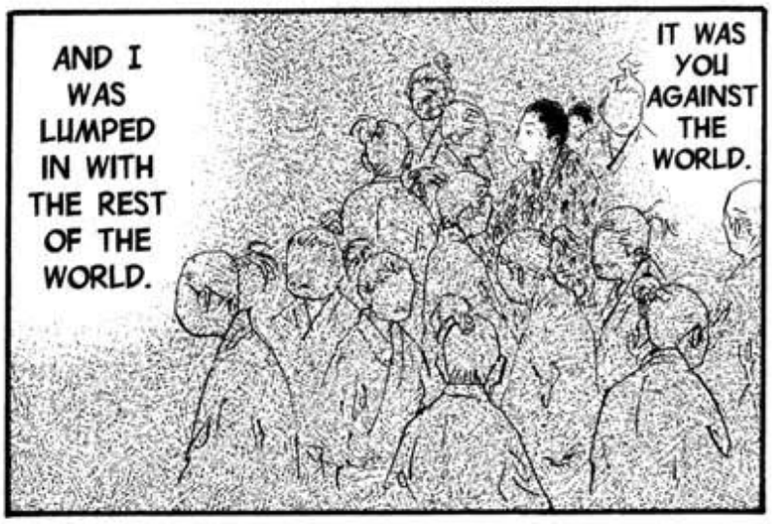
SO WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO...!?

I'M NOT SHAKING FROM FEAR.
BRR
BRR
BRR
HEY, TAKEZŌ...
BUT I'M...
YES, I KNOW THAT.
EVER SINCE WE WERE KIDS, YOU WERE SO STRONG.

WE WERE BOTH BIG AND STRONG KIDS. WE HAD A LOT IN COMMON BACK THEN.
BUT AT SOME POINT YOU BECAME REALLY STRONG.

I WAS STRONG TOO!

YOU BECAME SO INTIMI-DATING THAT YOU SCARED EVERYONE AWAY.

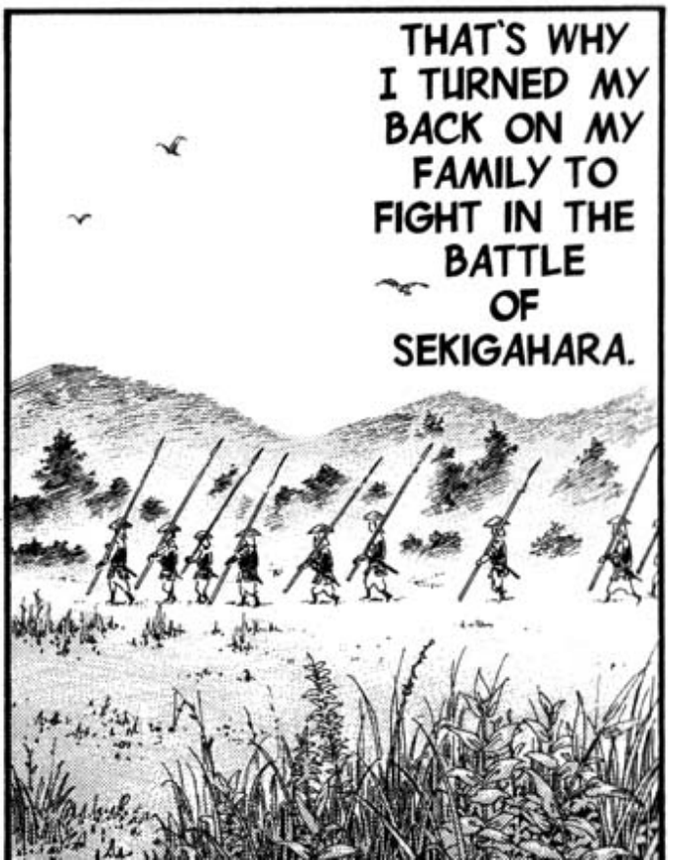

AND I WAS LUMPED IN WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.
IT WAS YOU AGAINST THE WORLD.

BUT YOU SEE, TAKEZŌ...

WE WERE STILL FRIENDS...
...BUT LITTLE BY LITTLE, I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WERE THINKING ANYMORE.

TAKEZŌ AND MATAHACHI...
I WANTED TO STAND BY YOUR SIDE AS AN EQUAL-- TWO STRONG MEN.
THAT'S HOW I ALWAYS WANTED IT TO BE.

THAT'S WHY...
THAT'S WHY I HAVEN'T GONE BACK TO OUR VILLAGE.


THAT'S WHY I TURNED MY BACK ON MY FAMILY TO FIGHT IN THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA.

THIS IS WHAT I WANTED TO BE LIKE.

BRR
BRR
BRR
I'M NOT SHAKING FROM FEAR.

...HE'S THE PERSONI-FICATION OF WHAT I'VE WANTED TO BE ALL MY LIFE.
THIS PERSON STANDING BEFORE ME...

EXACTLY LIKE HIM.

FICH
FICH
FICH

YAWN...
PLEASE JUST COME WITH US!
HOW CAN WE MAKE YOU UNDER-STAND?
WE SHALL DO OUR BEST TO GRANT YOU ANYTHING YOU NEED!

PLEASE, SIR!!
SASAKI, SIR, WE INVITE YOU TO OUR SCHOOL FOR INSTRUCTION IN YOUR SWORD TECHNIQUE.

AUHH

FIP

...

FWP
PLEASE COME WITH US...

YOSHI-OKA...
YO-SHI-O-KA...

PLEASE ...
...COME TO THE...

...!!

THIS ISN'T WORKING...
KAWW!
IT'S POINT-LESS.
HOW CAN YOU MAKE AN ALLY OF SOMEONE YOU CAN'T COMMUNICATE WITH?

FICH
FICH
AND HE CUT DOWN MIIKE! WE CAN'T WELCOME HIM AS AN HONORED GUEST...!
...!!
FWAP
FWAP
FWAP
KAWW
KAWW
FWAP
FWAP
FWAP
FWAP
...
TWITCH
FWAP

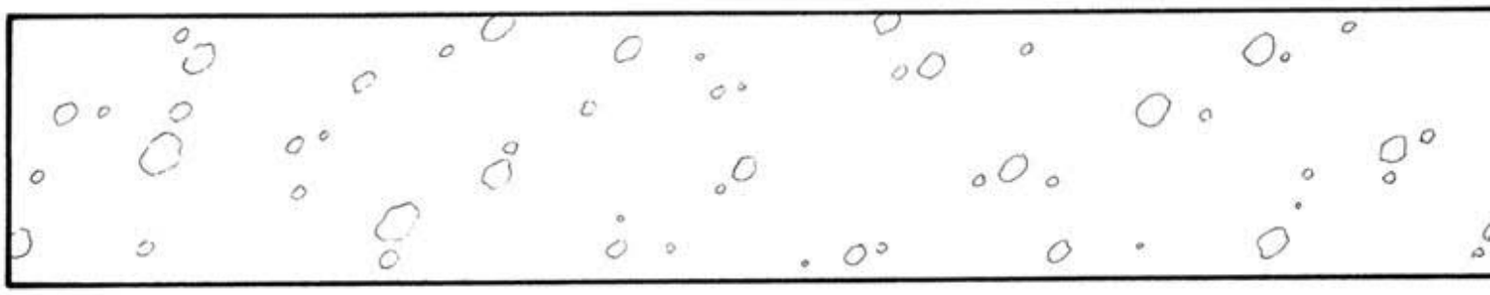
ZEH!

!?

!!
FWMP
SPLSHH

...
HUF
HUF
HUF
SHF
WAIT!
UH...
!!
THWUP

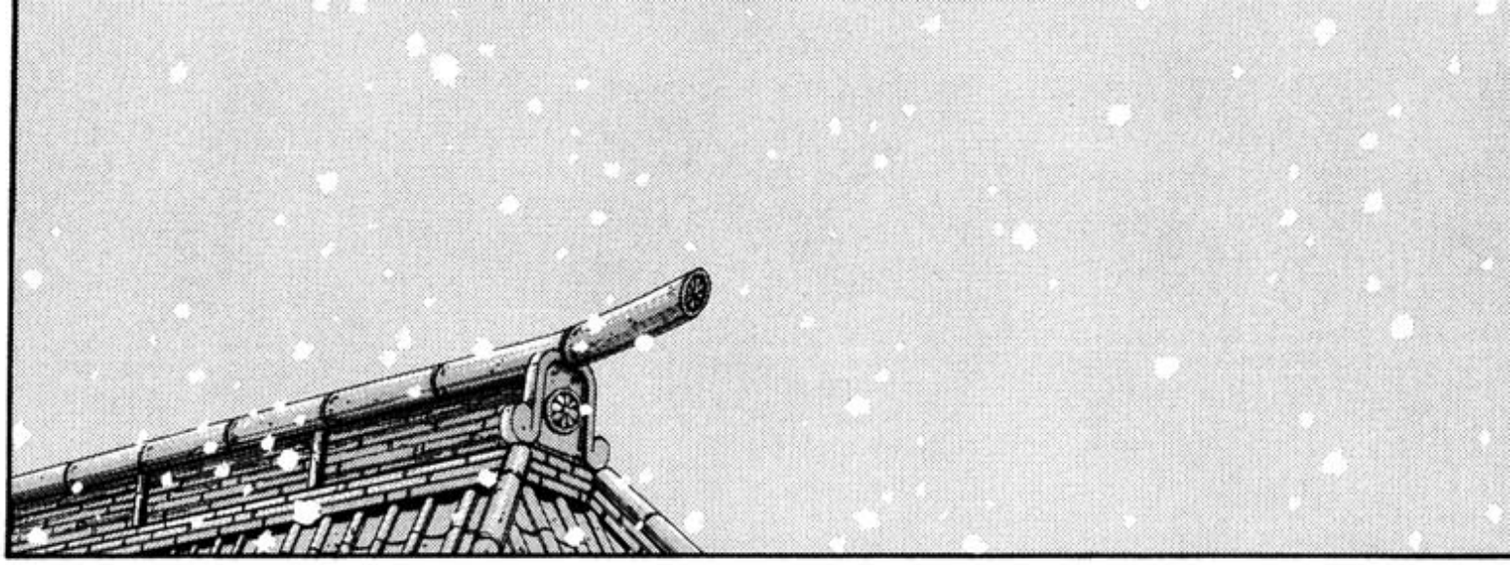
STOP!



IT'S COMING DOWN AGAIN...

Vagabond

#200 | Two Kojirōs



IT'S SNOWING AGAIN...

IT MAY SNOW THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW TOO--FOR THE DAY OF THE DUEL.

RIGHT NOW YOU MUSTN'T THINK ABOUT FIGHTING. FOCUS ON REST AND RECOVERY.
I'M GETTING TOO WORKED UP OVER THIS FIGHT. WHAT A TIME TO BE IN BED WITH A FEVER.
HOW PATHETIC ...
OF COURSE... I'LL BE FINE AFTER A NIGHT'S SLEEP.
UEDA...
I WILL WIN.
NOT AT ALL.
FORGIVE ME FOR HITTING YOU.

I WILL.

.....

I NEED TO SLEEP.

DEN...
GO NOW.

HE HASN'T BEEN SLEEPING THESE PAST FEW DAYS.
THIS IS JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME, BUT...
I THINK HE IS UNABLE TO SLEEP AT ALL.

DENSHICHIRŌ HAS A LONG CAREER AHEAD OF HIM AS THE HEAD OF THIS SCHOOL.
DON'T WORRY, OMITSU.
THE MASTER IS A VERY SPECIAL MAN.
WAIT!
STOP THIS!

WAIT, KOJIRŌ!

?

ARE YOU A DEMON?! THERE'S NO POINT IN CUTTING THIS FELLOW DOWN TOO!
I KNOW YOU'VE NEVER LOST A MATCH!
BUT...

IF YOU KILL EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM...
THE YOSHIOKA WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO HUNT YOU DOWN!

YOU PROBABLY DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LOSE.
HUF
HUF

BUT THIS FELLOW ALREADY REALIZES HE'S NO MATCH AGAINST YOU.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT!?
SO THAT'S ENOUGH.

THE LOSERS ARE HAUNTED BY THEIR DEFEATS...
...BUT THEY LIVE ON.
THEY HAVE TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD!!

FSH

THEY HAVE TO BELIEVE IN THEM-SELVES SOME-HOW.
LOSERS ARE HUMAN TOO.
KOJIRO ...

YOU MUSTN'T TAKE THAT AWAY FROM HIM!
KOJIRŌ!

LET HIM AT LEAST HANG ON TO A SMALL PIECE OF HIS DIGNITY!
YOU'RE NO DEMON.
RIGHT ?
DON'T DO IT.

FWISH
FWP
MY ROLE MODEL IS NO BLOOD-THIRSTY MONSTER.
CHK
...!!

STARE
I DON'T KNOW...
WHY WAS I SO PASSIONATE IN TELLING KOJIRŌ ALL THAT?
...!!
PHEW
THANK YOU.
THE SAMURAI FROM THE YOSHIOKA EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE...
OF COURSE, HE HEARD NOTHING OF WHAT I SAID.
IN ANY CASE, IT GAVE THE APPEARANCE THAT KOJIRŌ WAS LISTENING TO ME.

AND THAT STIRRED UP SOMETHING INSIDE ME.
(YOSHIOKA KEMPŌ)
THE NEXT THING I KNEW...
...I WAS ENTERING THE ONE PLACE I'D BEEN MOST TRYING TO AVOID.

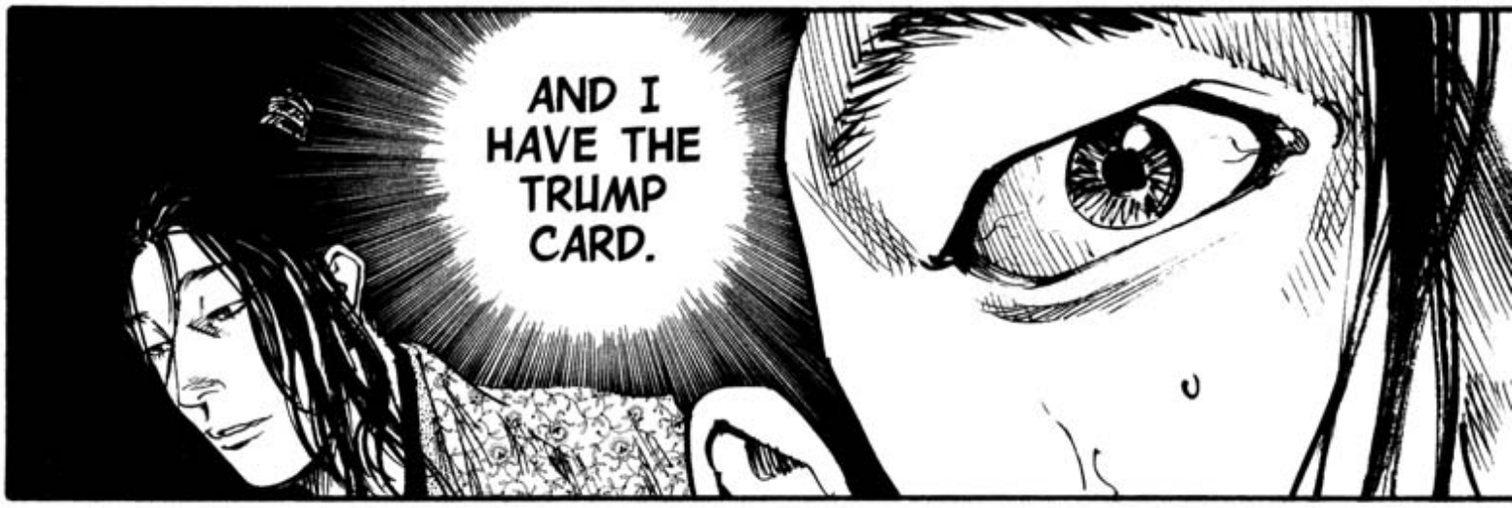
SASAKI KOJIRŌ OF THE GANRYŪ STYLE STANDS BEFORE YOU!
GOOD FELLOWS OF THE YOSHIOKA.
THOUGH SOME OF YOU SACRIFICED YOUR LIVES TO BRING THIS MAN HERE...

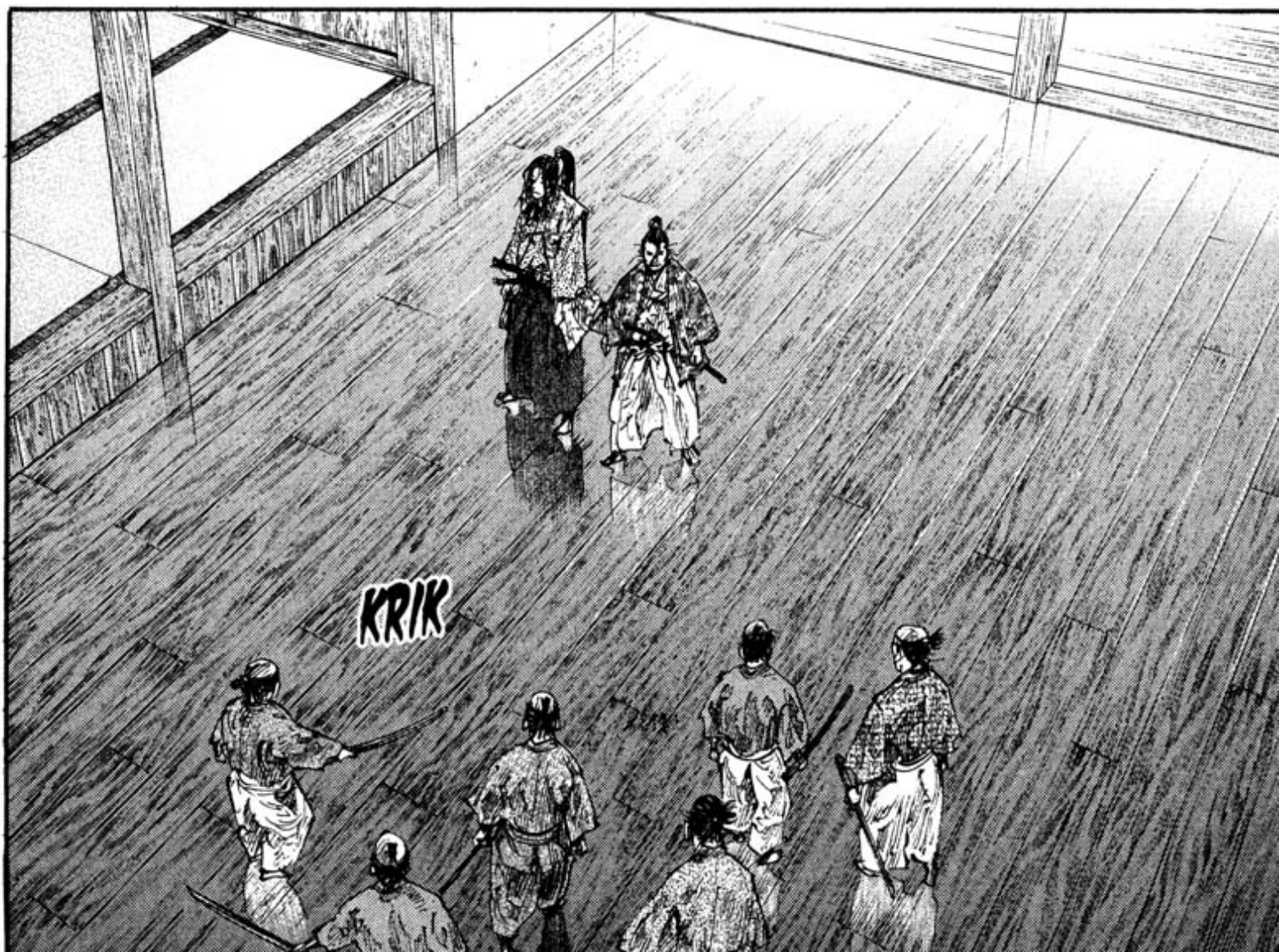
WHAT ...!?
GLANCE
GLANCE

KO-
KOJIRŌ...
...
...CUT THEM BOTH DOWN.
SACRI-
FICED
LIVES
...!?
SAKAI
!
WHERE ARE MIIKE AND SAITŌ!?
KOJIRŌ
...
WHAT
!?
YOU SAW YOURSELF, SAKAI!
WAIT!
AS UNFORTUNATE AS THEIR FATES WERE, *THEY* WERE THE ONES WHO ATTACKED KOJIRŌ!
WHO LET *YOU* INTO THE DOJO?
AND WHO ARE YOU?
NOD
...

THUMP
THIS IS HOW I MIGHT MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF.
DON'T BACK DOWN.
THIS IS MY CHANCE.
THUMP

THMP-THMP
YIKES! UEDA RYŌHEI!
HE'S SO INTIMI-DATING.


AND I HAVE THE TRUMP CARD.


KRIK

KRIK
KRIK
YOU CUT DOWN MIIKE AND SAITŌ...
...AND THEN YOU HAVE THE AUDACITY TO BARGE IN ON US LIKE THIS. BE PREPARED TO PAY FOR YOUR INSOLENCE.

SAKAI, IS THAT KOJIRŌ?
INDEED.
STOP!!
SHALL WE GO, KOJIRŌ?
THAT'S ODD.
I THOUGHT KOJIRŌ WAS TO BE WELCOMED AS AN HONORED GUEST. PERHAPS I WAS MISTAKEN.

YOU SEE...
KOJIRŌ IS DEAF.
SO YOU'LL HAVE TO SPEAK THROUGH ME.

KOJIRŌ!
NOW SEE HERE!

?
SASAKI KOJIRŌ WON'T LISTEN TO ANYONE BUT ME.

Vagabond

なにぃ？
(WHAT?!)
あんだと？
(WHAT?!)

WE HAVE NO BUSINESS WITH YOU!
HM?
YOU MUST BE A LITTLE SLOW...
WE HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO THE LIKES OF YOU!
NO ONE ELSE.
WE'RE ONLY INTERESTED IN SASAKI KOJIRŌ!

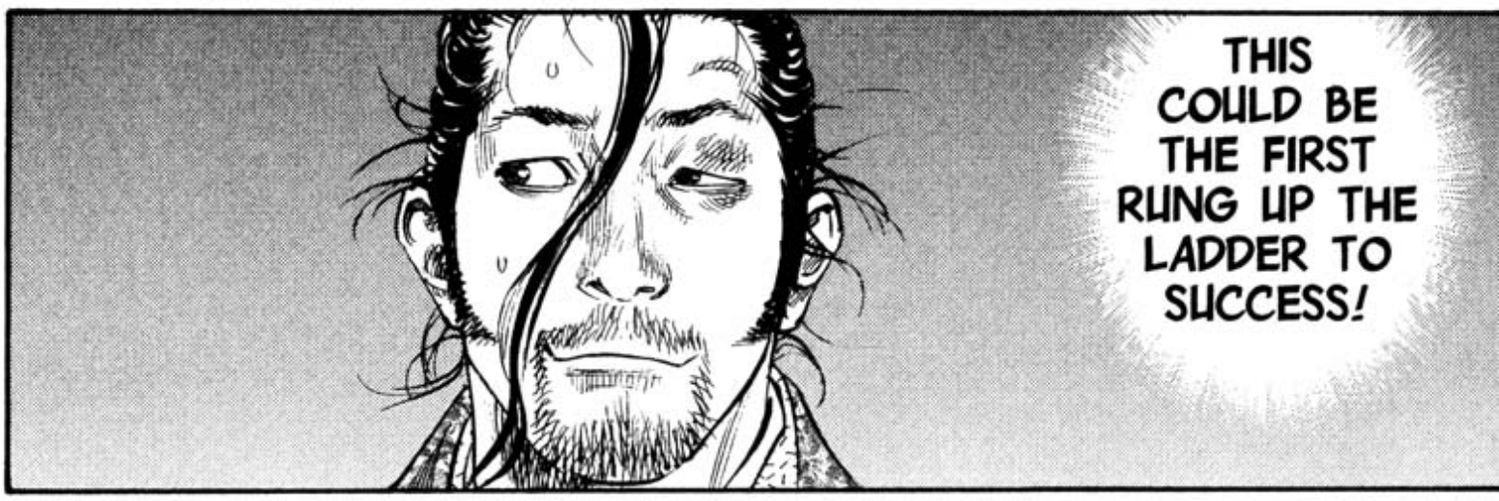
#201 Ladder to Success
UNLESS I'M HERE, THAT IS!
UNDER-STAND?

KOJIRŌ CAN NEITHER SPEAK...
...NOR CAN HE HEAR.
SO HE'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHATEVER BUSINESS IT IS YOU HAVE WITH HIM...

ULP

WAIT.

THMP-
THMP


THIS COULD BE THE FIRST RUNG UP THE LADDER TO SUCCESS!

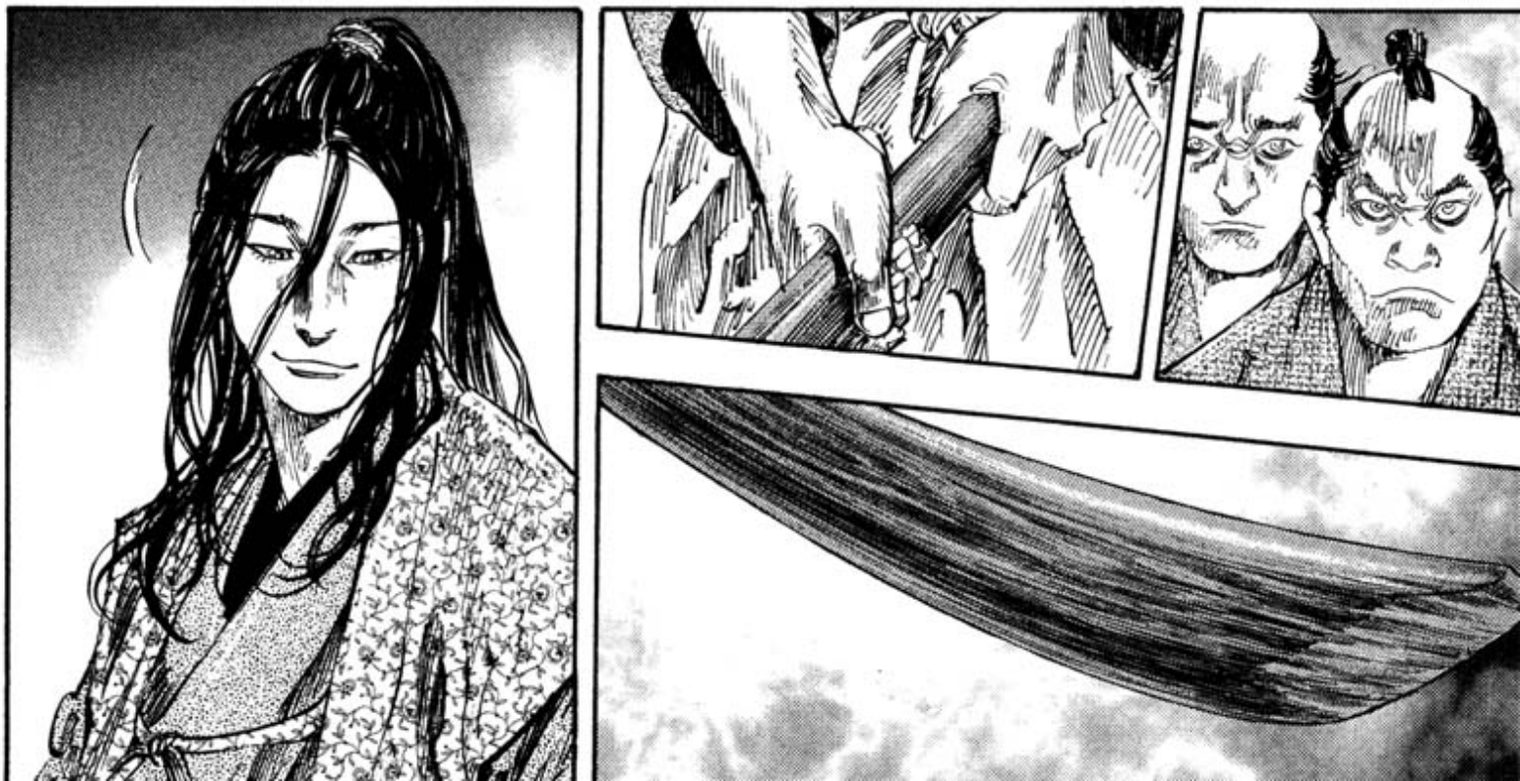
THIS IS MY CHANCE!
COME TO THINK OF IT...
...THIS FELLOW LOOKS FAMILIAR...
DON'T YOU THINK?
?

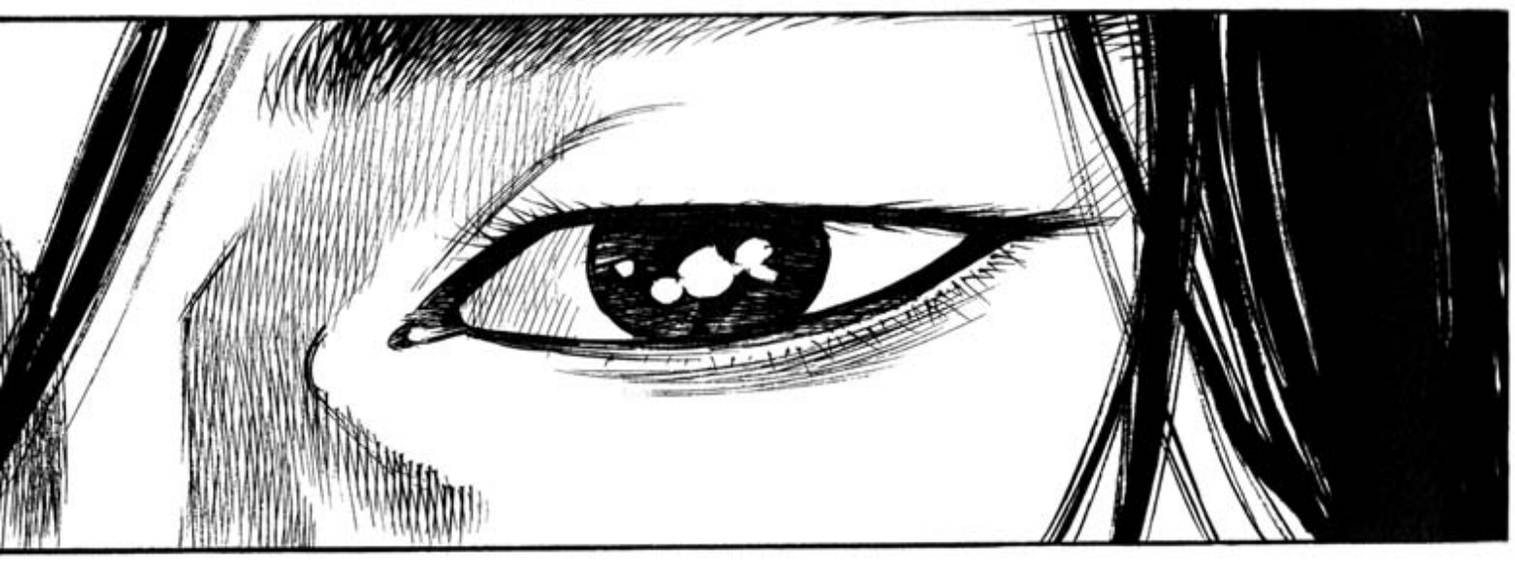
FIRST, I'LL HAVE HIM PROMOTED AS A MASTER OF THIS SCHOOL.
THE PRES-TIGE WILL HELP US OUT FOR THE FUTURE.

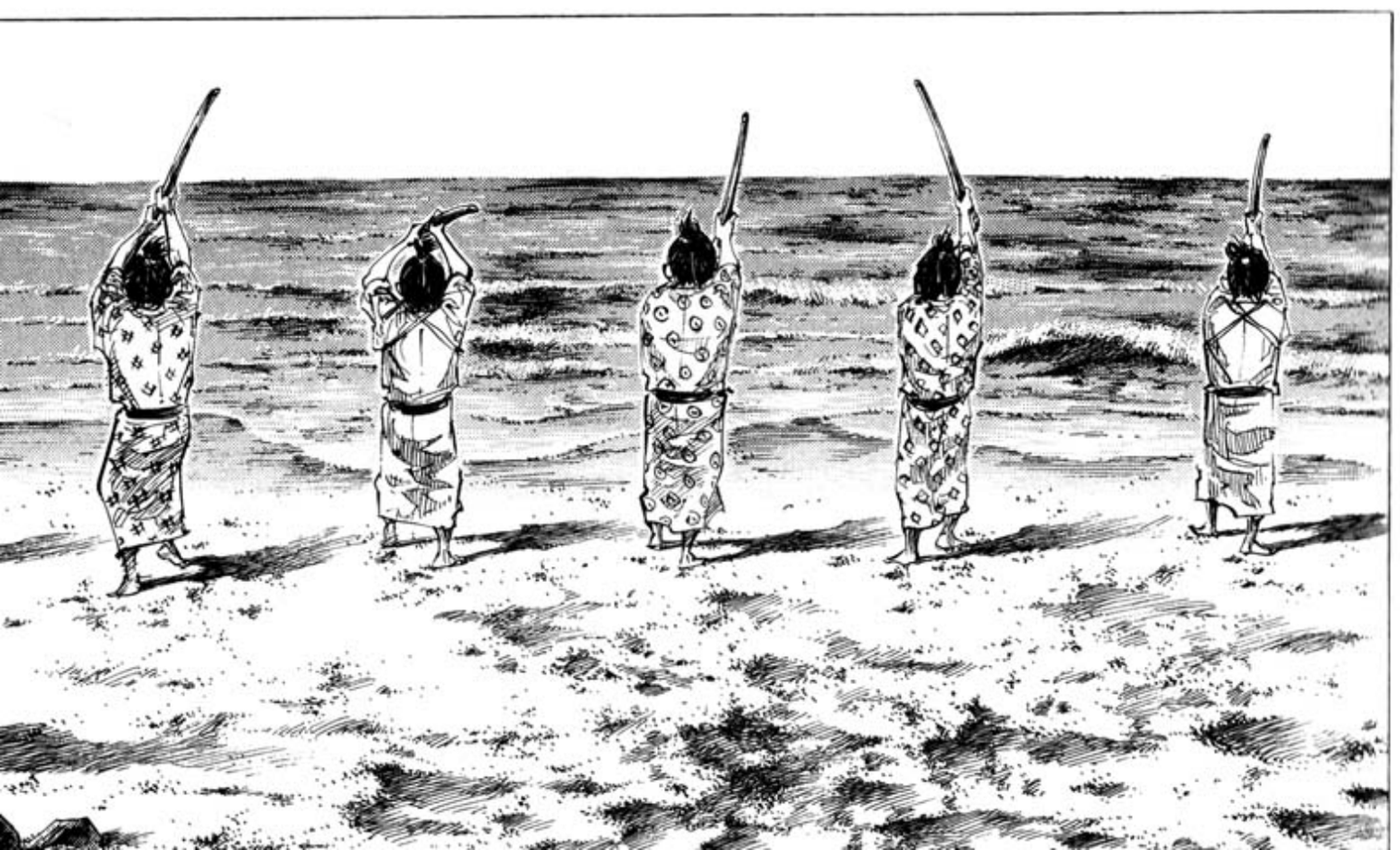
IF I STICK WITH KOJIRŌ, WE'LL EVENTUALLY BE OFFERED A POSITION TO SERVE A DAIMYO.
BUT THE YOSHIOKA'S ONLY THE FIRST STEP.
AND THAT WILL INDEED BE A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY!
YOU DON'T KNOW THE KIND OF BURDEN I'VE HAD TO BEAR.
BUT YOU PROBABLY DON'T EVEN CARE.
NOW I CAN CATCH UP TO YOU AND MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME.
TAKEZŌ!
ARE YOU SOME-WHERE HERE IN KYOTO?

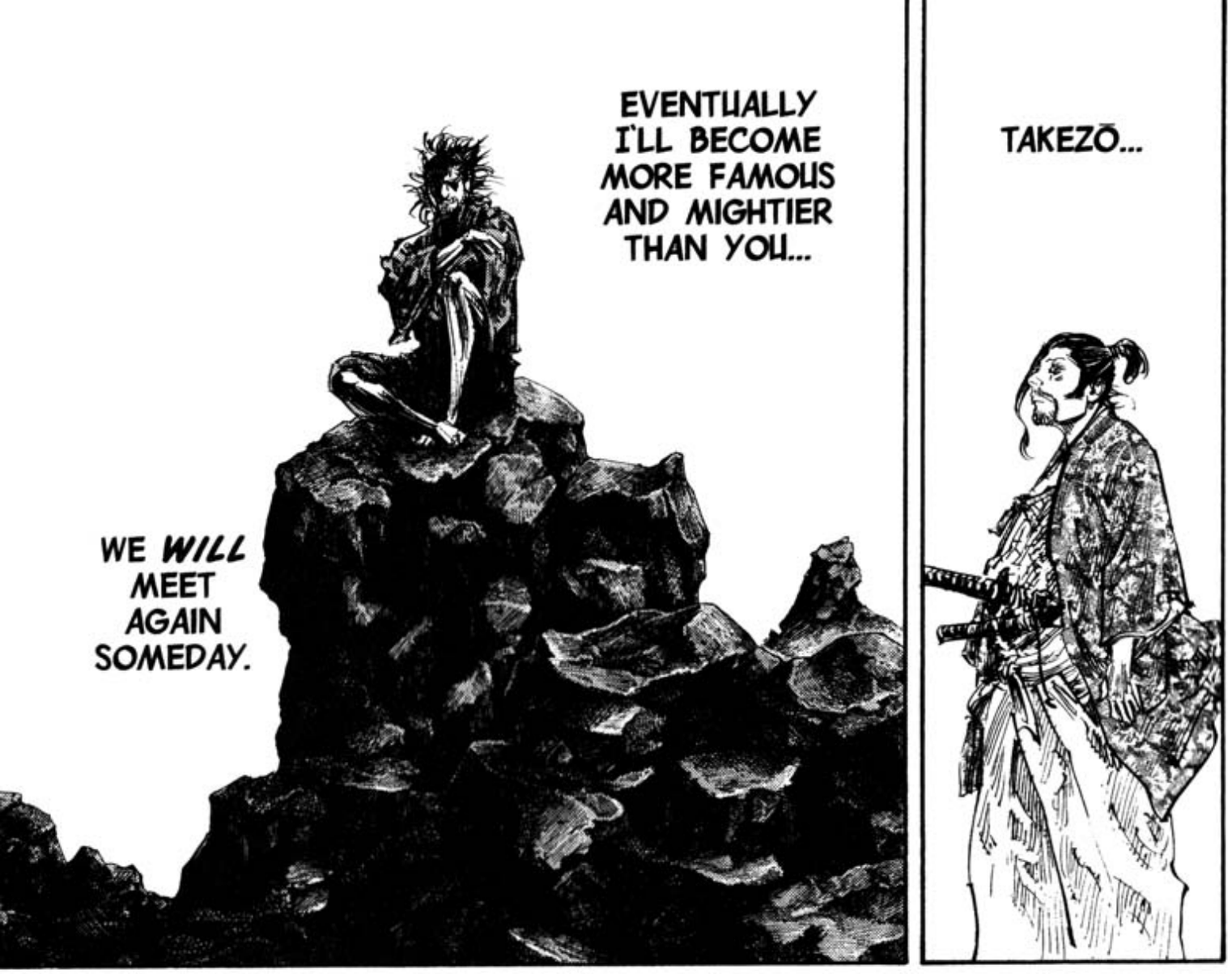
BECAUSE I HAVE SASAKI KOJIRŌ ON MY SIDE.

AHH!

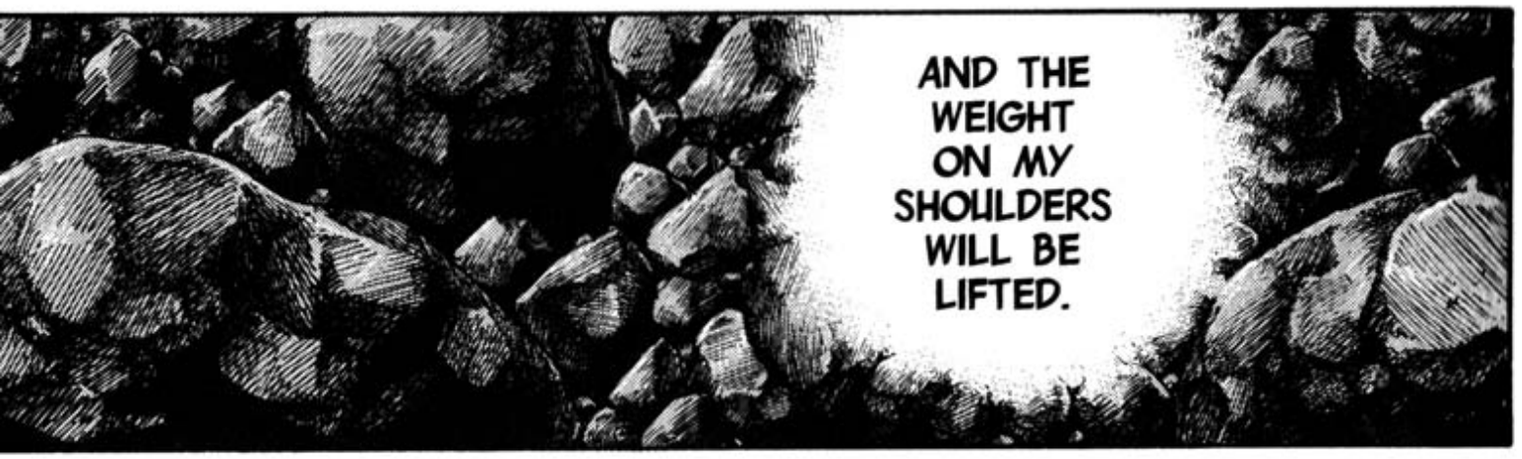







EVENTUALLY I'LL BECOME MORE FAMOUS AND MIGHTIER THAN YOU...
WE *WILL* MEET AGAIN SOMEDAY.

TAKEZŌ...


AND THE WEIGHT ON MY SHOULDERS WILL BE LIFTED.

!!
THIS MAN IS HON'IDEN MATA-HACHI!

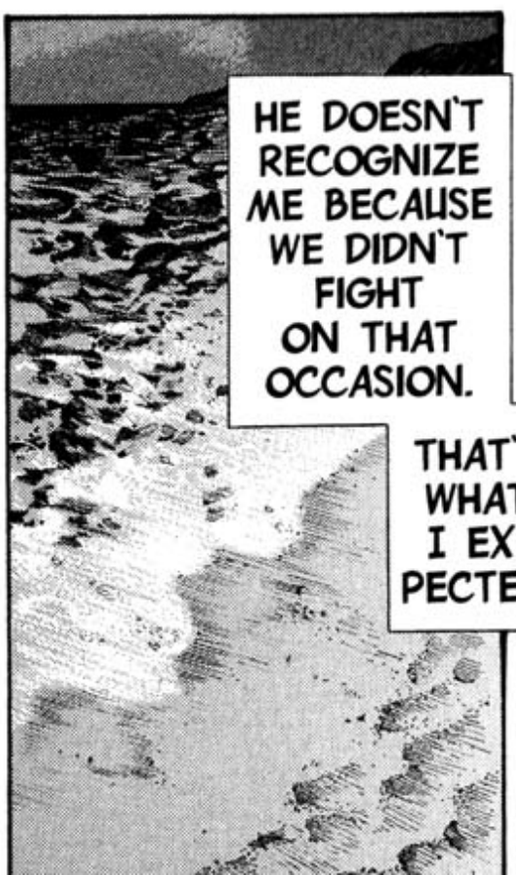
BUT I'M NOT QUITE CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO SEE YOU YET.
BUT JUST YOU WAIT...

NO! THIS IS A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TRIED TO BURN DOWN OUR SCHOOL!
THWAK
YOU'RE ON THE WANTED POSTING!
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE...
N-NO! YOU BASTARD, SAKAI!
YOU MEAN...
...OKŌ'S PIMP!
MATA-HACHI!
SHUT UP!
GRAB
MY NAME IS SASAKI KOUJIRŌ!
HE CAME HERE OF HIS OWN VOLITION.
NO NEED TO TAKE HIM TO THE AUTHORI-TIES.
WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THINGS RIGHT NOW!
STOP!

...!!

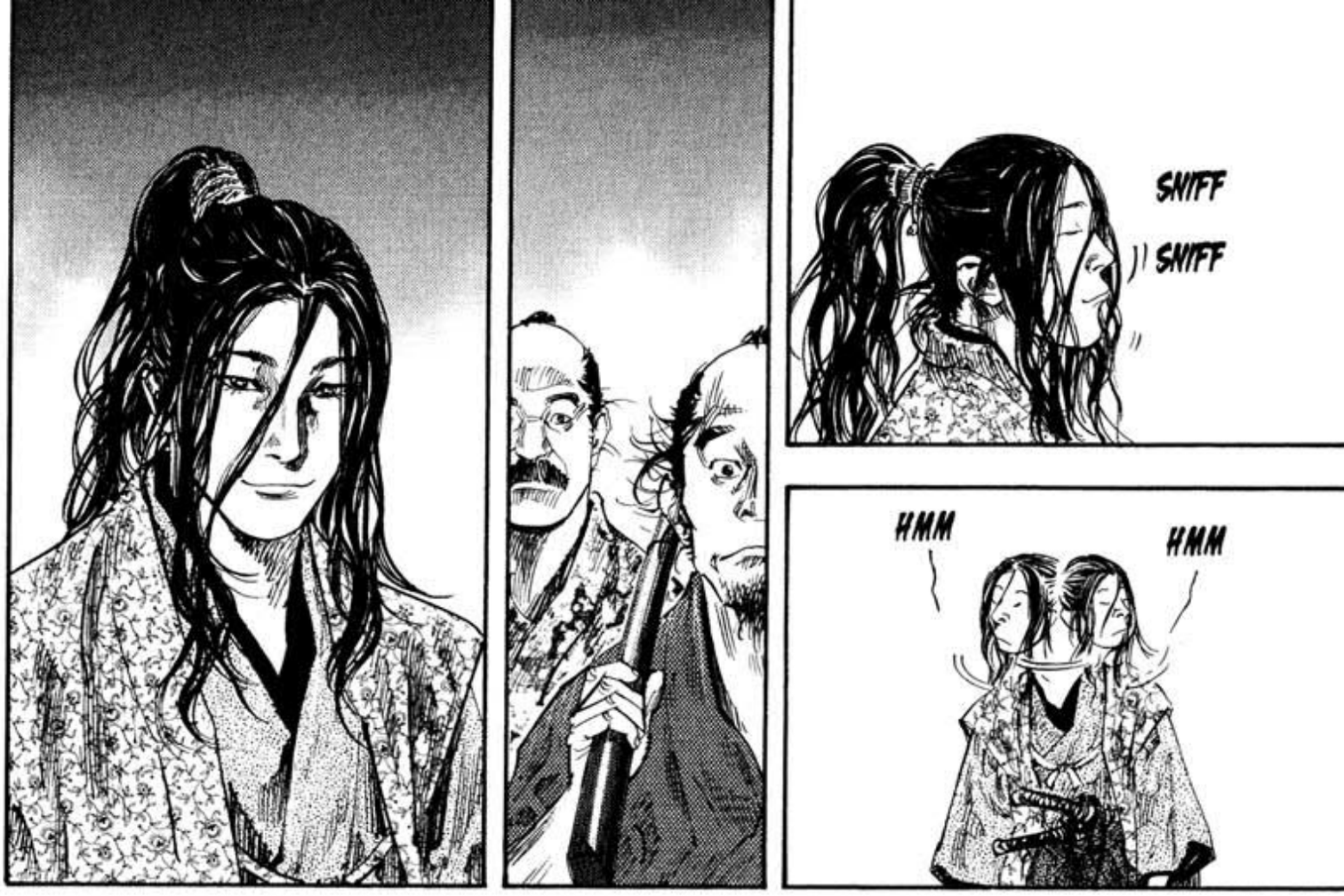
FWUMP
...

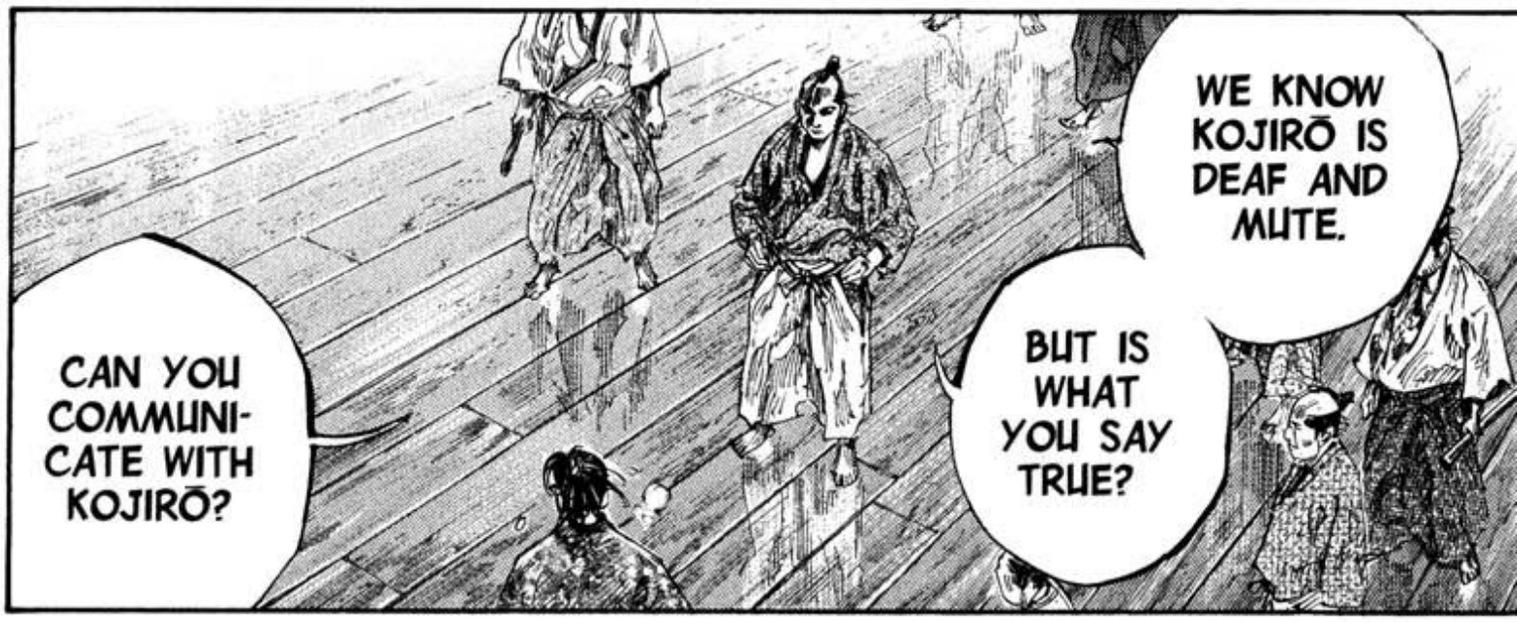
WAIT.


HE DOESN'T RECOGNIZE ME BECAUSE WE DIDN'T FIGHT ON THAT OCCASION.
THAT'S WHAT I EX-PECTED.

GLANCE
GLANCE

SO...

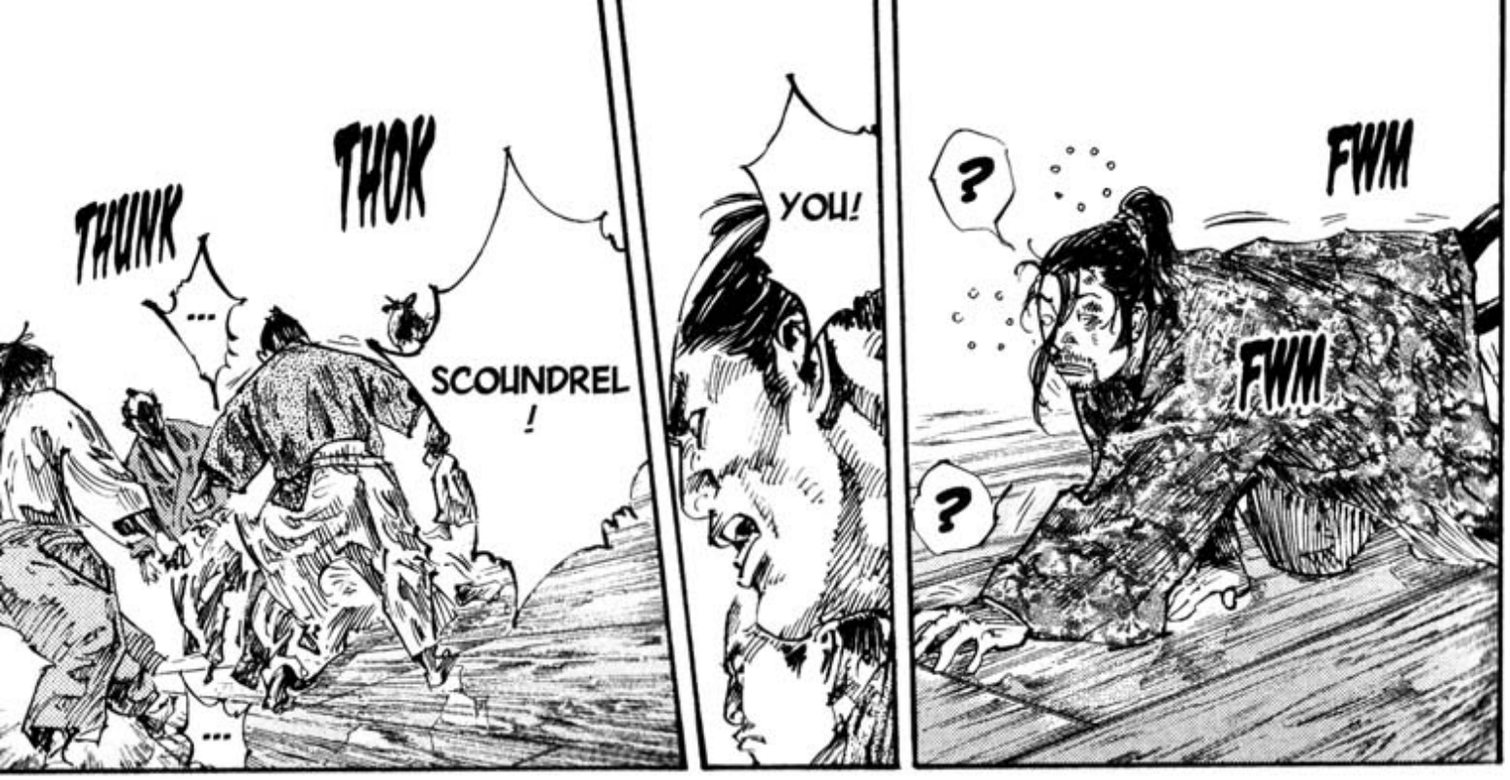

SNIFF
SNIFF
HMM
HMM


CAN YOU COMMUNI-CATE WITH KOJIRŌ?
BUT IS WHAT YOU SAY TRUE?
WE KNOW KOJIRŌ IS DEAF AND MUTE.

AN EXCHANGE OF SWORD TECHNIQUES IF YOU WILL.
WE'D LIKE HIM TO SHARE HIS EXPERTISE WITH US. OF COURSE, WE WOULD BE WILLING TO SHARE THE TECHNIQUES OF OUR SCHOOL WITH HIM.
WE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME HIM HERE AS A GUEST...

WITH SEIJŪRŌ GONE, THIS SCHOOL MUST BE IN CHAOS.
PERHAPS KOJIRŌ MIGHT END UP BECOMING HEAD OF THE SCHOOL.
AHH
CAN YOU ARRANGE THIS WITH HIM?
.....
VERY WELL THEN.
NOD
STOMP
RIDICULOUS!
I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS!

THWAK
WHUDD
MIIKE AND SAITO WERE KILLED, UEDA!
THESE SCOUNDRELS AREN'T WORTH IT. WE DON'T NEED A STAND-IN FIGHTER!
AND YOU WANT US TO TURN A BLIND EYE.


THUNK
...
THOK
SCOUNDREL
!
...
YOU!
?
FWM
FWM
?

IF A MAN CANNOT AVENGE HIS FALLEN COMRADES ...
...WHY ELSE WOULD HE TAKE UP THE SWORD?!

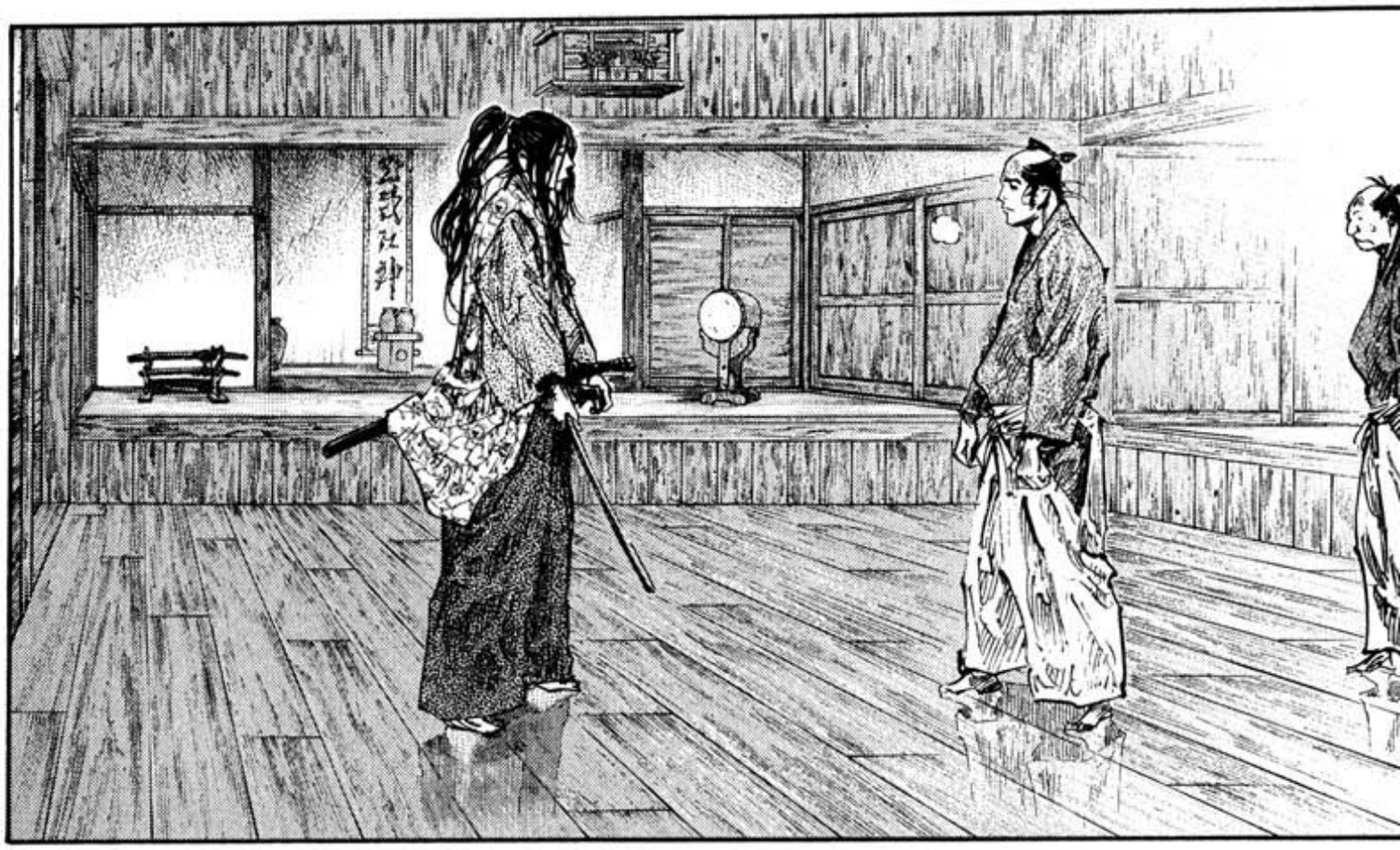
!!
!!
KLAK

AUHH.

...
FWUMP
FICH
AUHH

KRAKK

THUP
STEP ASIDE!



HUH?
UEDA!?
...
I WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO DIE.
DENSHICHIRŌ MUST REMAIN AS THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL.

Vagabond

(HUH?)

#202 | Presumptuous

I OFFER MY DEEPEST APOLOGIES TO BOTH OF YOU.
PLEASE RECONSIDER OUR INVITATION TO BE A GUEST INSTRUCTOR FOR OUR SCHOOL.
...!!
SASAKI KOJIRŌ, SIR...!!

SASAKI KOUJIRŌ.

I BESEECH YOU, HON'IDEN MATA--
NO...
SASAKI...

HM
...

WHAT?

.....
HMM...
...!!

ZING
URGH ...
OH, THE PAIN.
WHAT KIND OF TREATMENT IS THIS?
FWOM

ARGH ...!!
ABSURD ...

WE TOOK IT UPON OURSELVES TO COME HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE LOOKING FOR KOJIRŌ.
WE CAME TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAD TO SAY. WE WEREN'T LOOKING FOR A FIGHT.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?
AND MIIKE WAS THE ONE WHO DREW HIS SWORD ON KOJIRŌ. YOU CAN'T BLAME US FOR THAT.

HEH HEH... GOOD JOB, MATA-HACHI.
LOOK, THE MIGHTY UEDA RYŌHEI IS ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES.
ACTUALLY, IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, KOJIRŌ.
.....
WHAT?
TUGG
RIGHT, KOJIRŌ?
ULP.
GASP
...

YOU CAN GET UP NOW.
ALL RIGHT, UEDA.

HOW-EVER...
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO KOJIRŌ.
I ACCEPT YOUR INVITATION.

THERE'S JUST ONE THING...
...YOU MUSTN'T FORGET.
AUHH?
THE TWO OF US WORK AS ONE.

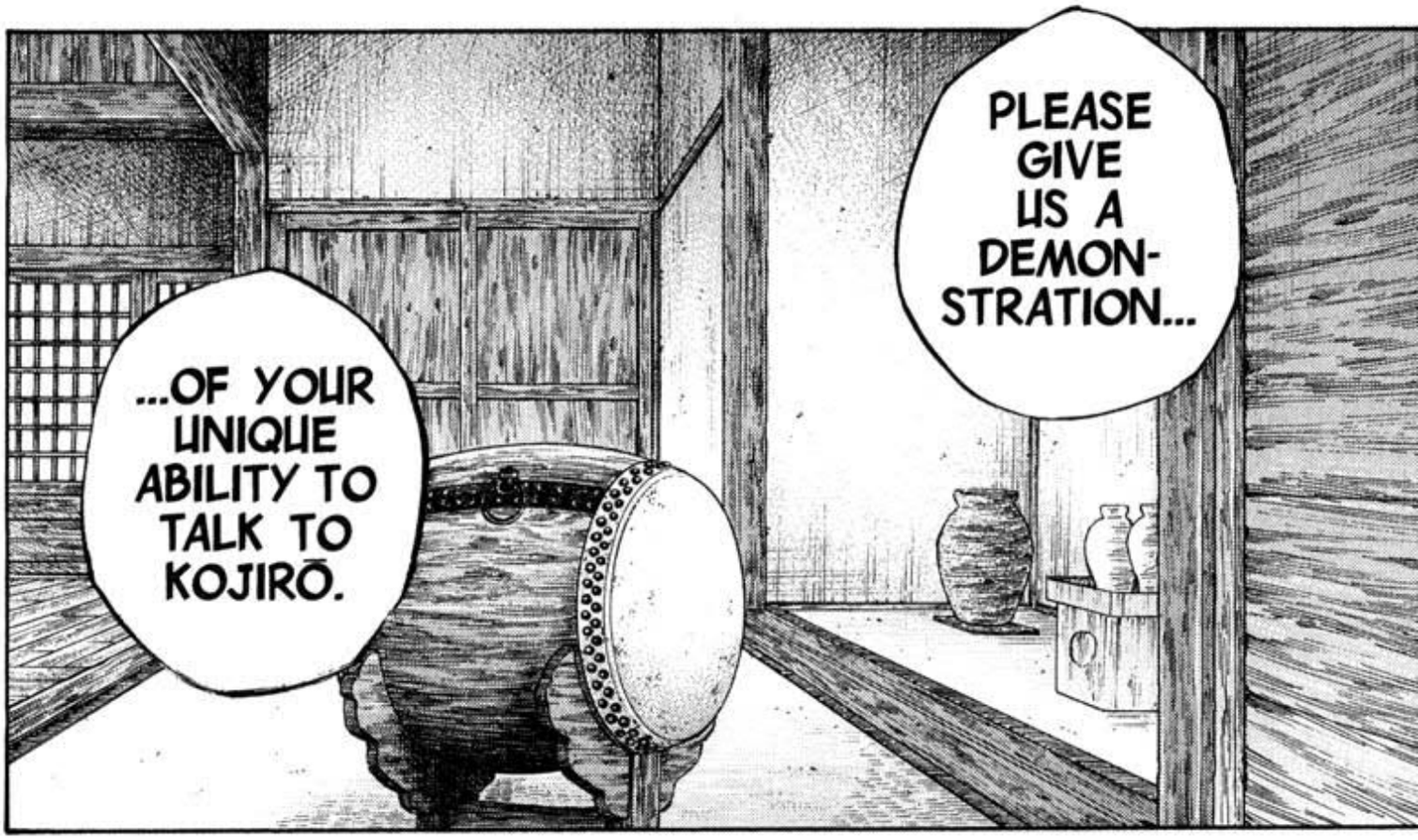
武士神
YOU ASK FOR GANRYŪ SASAKI KOJIRŌ...
...AND YOU GET ME TOO!!
GOT THAT !?

IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO KOJIRŌ...
...THEN YOU MUST GO THROUGH ME, SASAKI KOUJIRŌ, FIRST!
UNDER-STOOD!?
HUH?
URR
THUMP-THMP
THUMP-THMP
SIR KOUJIRŌ...

?!

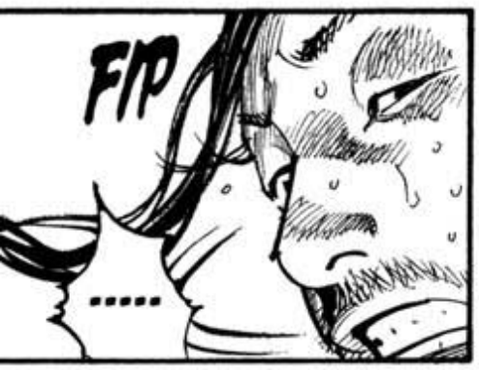
HOW ABOUT A DEMON-STRATION...
WELL, SIR KOUJIRŌ?

YES.
GREAT IDEA.


PLEASE GIVE US A DEMON-STRATION...
...OF YOUR UNIQUE ABILITY TO TALK TO KOJIRŌ.

OF COURSE.

WHAT SHOULD I DO!?
WHAT--
DARN!


FIP
.....

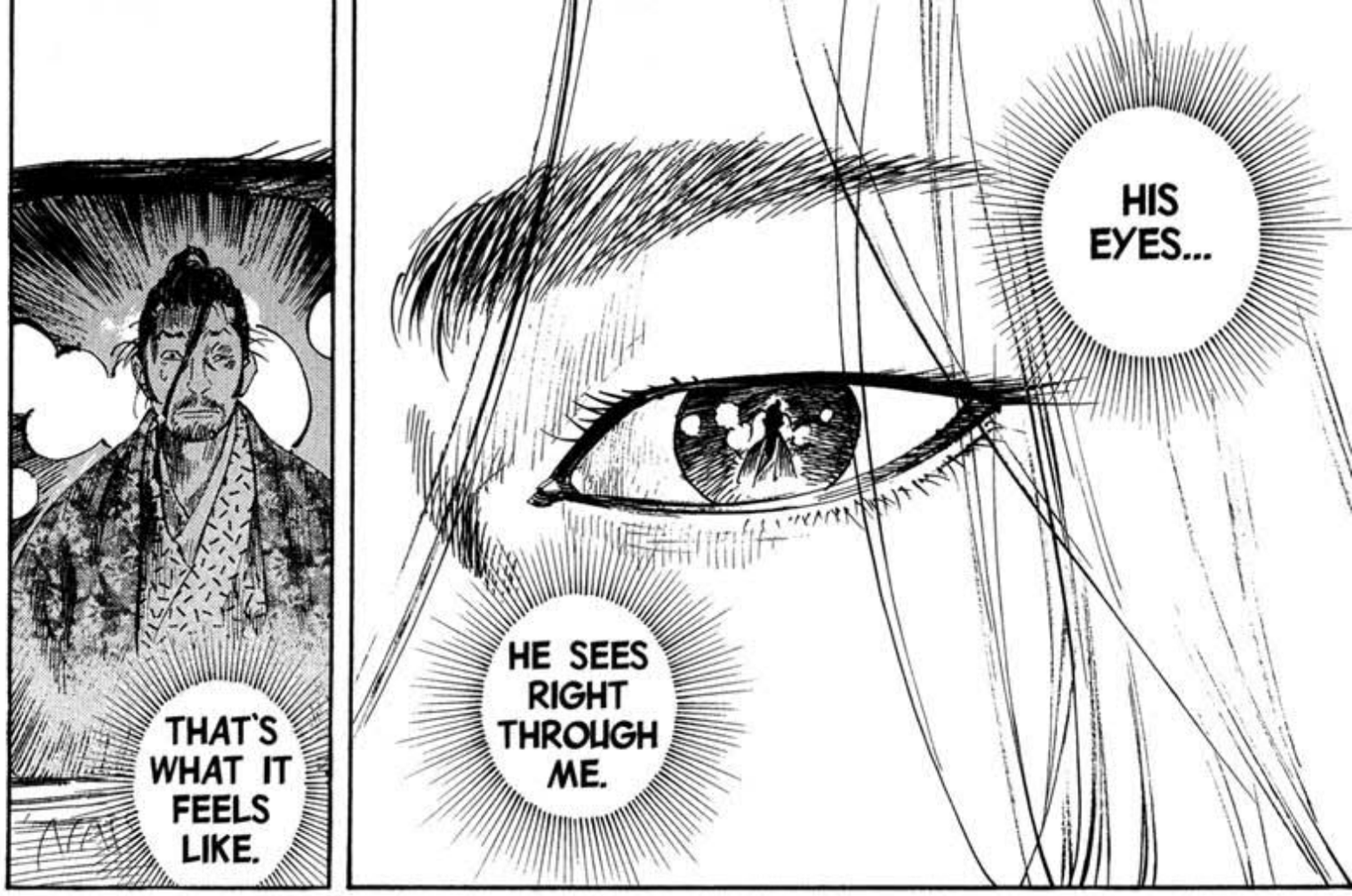
WHAT'S WRONG?! COME ON!!

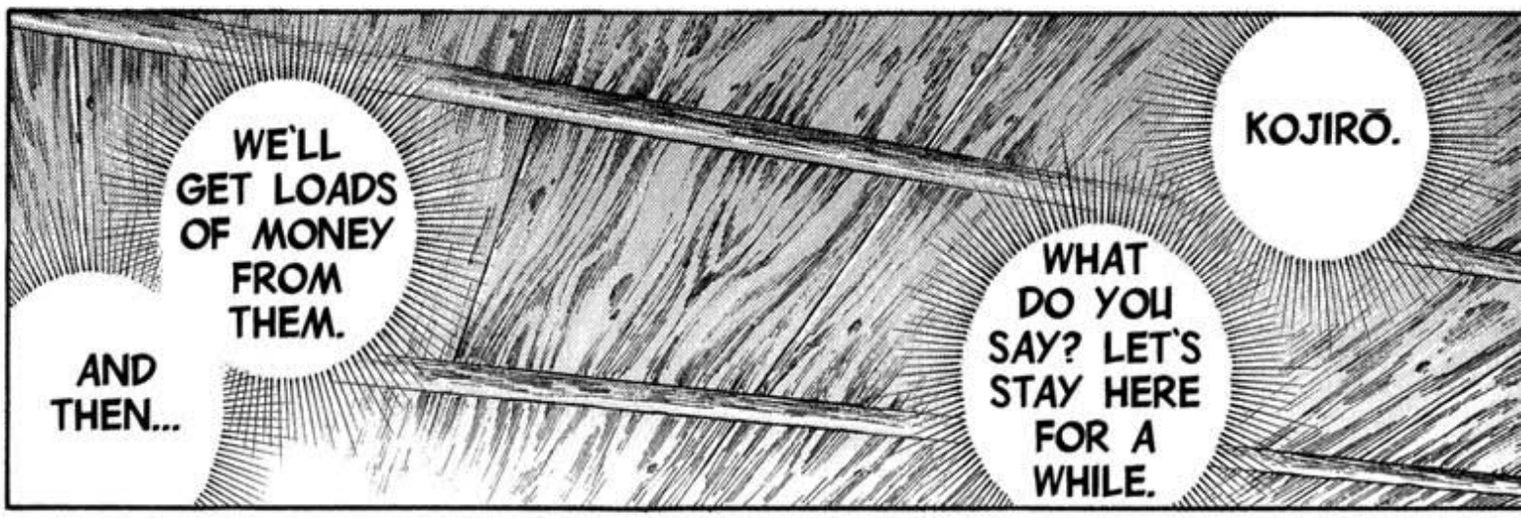
HOW DARE YOU INTERFERE WITH OUR COMMUNI-CATION!
HOW DARE YOU!
.....
HUH?

YOU'RE INTER-FERING.
KEEP IT DOWN !!

HE DOESN'T UNDER-STAND WORDS...
DON'T YOU SEE?
KOJIRŌ CAN'T HEAR...
SO HOW DO YOU THINK WE COM-MUNICATE?
HUH?
HERE GOES NOTHING.
DON'T DISTRACT ME!
OUR MINDS.
WE EXCHANGE THOUGHTS WITHOUT SPEECH.
OKAY!
MUST CONCEN-TRATE.
HOW WOULD WE KNOW!?
JUST HURRY IT UP!

THMP-
THMP
ULP
THMP-
THMP
THMP-
THMP
TH...
THOUGHTS
...
WHAT IS
KOJIRŌ
THINKING
?
...
I-I
HAVE
NO
IDEA!

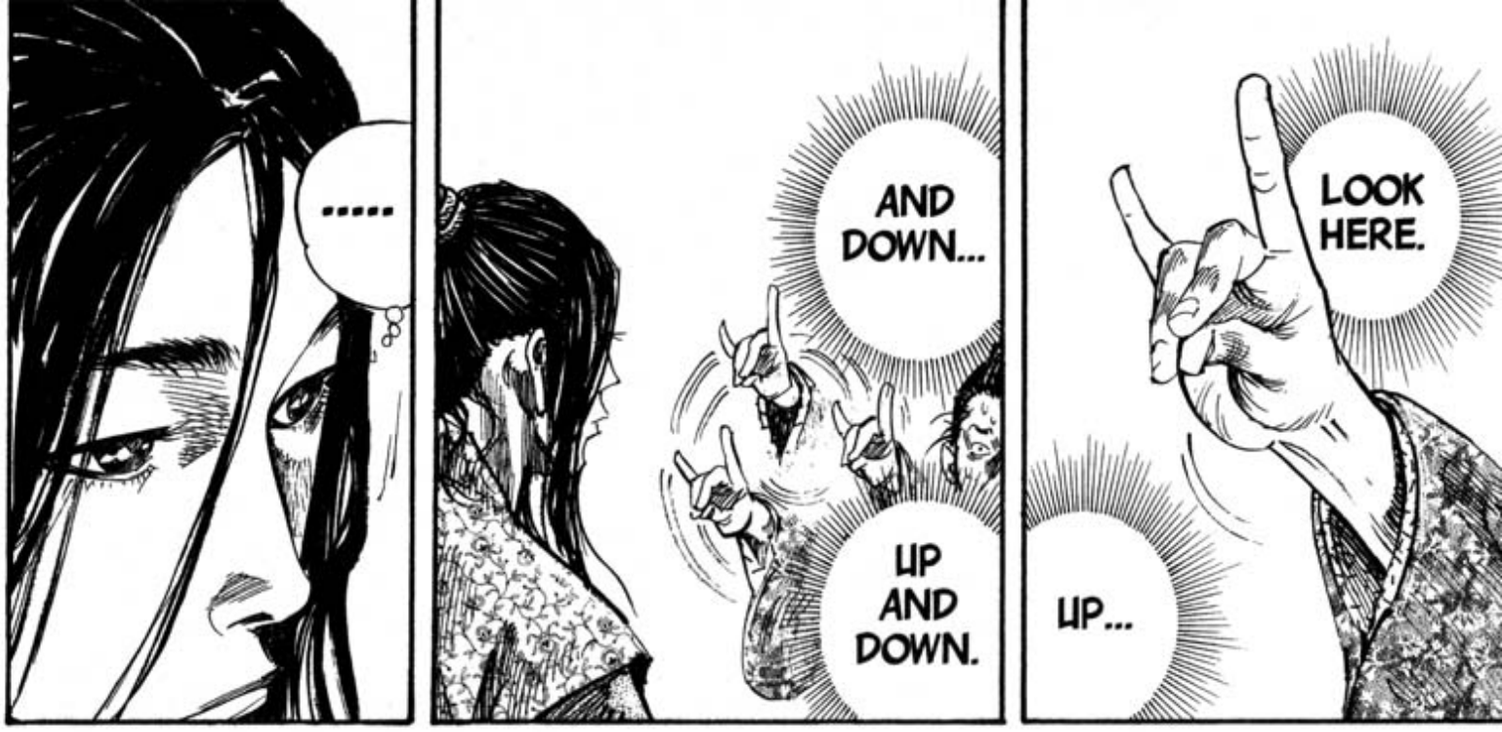

THAT'S WHAT IT FEELS LIKE.
HE SEES RIGHT THROUGH ME.
HIS EYES...

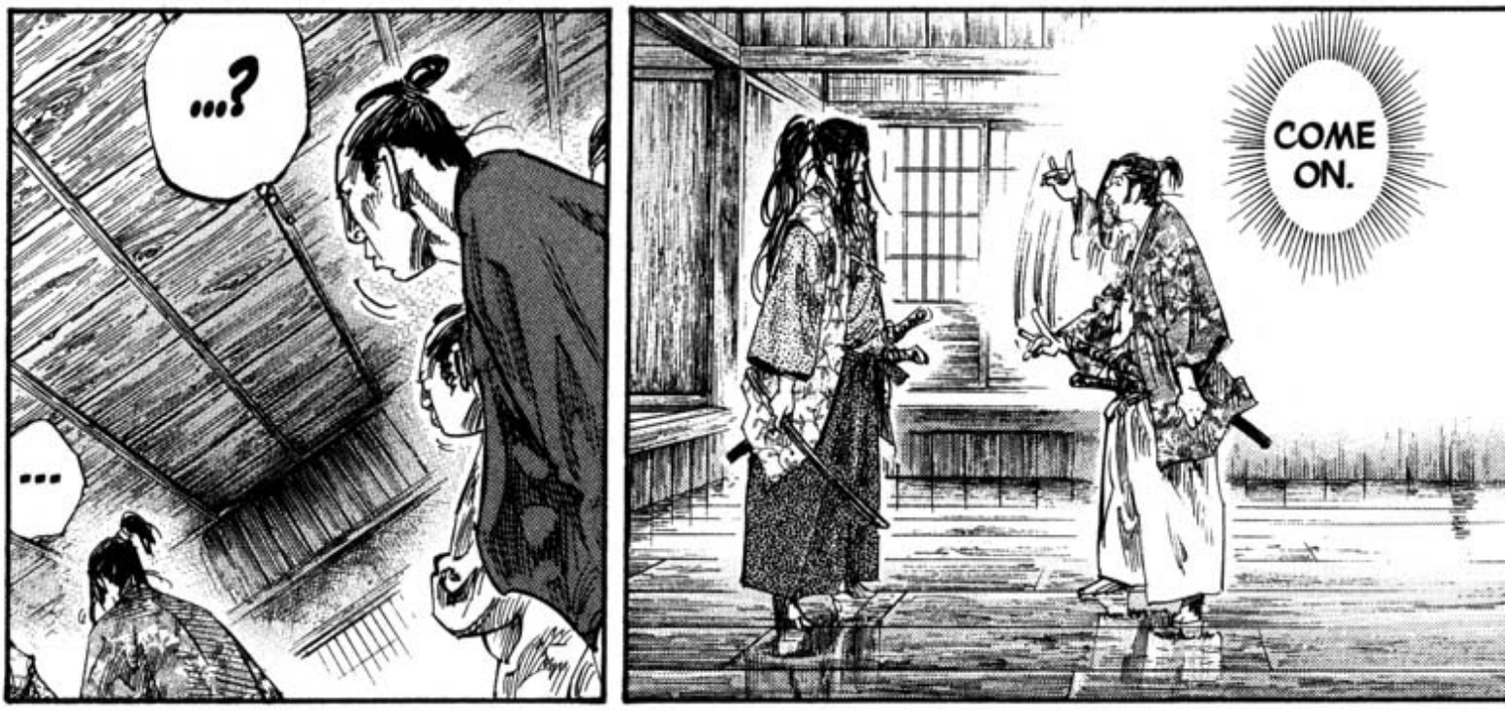

AND THEN...
WE'LL GET LOADS OF MONEY FROM THEM.
WHAT DO YOU SAY? LET'S STAY HERE FOR A WHILE.
KOJIRŌ.

.....

WE'LL MOVE ON TO THE BIG TIME!!

GRIP
...
HUF
HUF
?
KOJIRŌ.
I'M IN TROUBLE HERE!
NOD
PLEASE.
NOD
JUST NOD YOUR HEAD!
YOU HAVE TO SAVE ME.


.....
AND DOWN...
UP AND DOWN.
LOOK HERE.
UP...


...?
...
COME ON.

...
HERE WE GO...
COME ON.
LOOK...

!!
YIKES!
AUHH
FWAK
YOU ALL SAW IT...
...
...

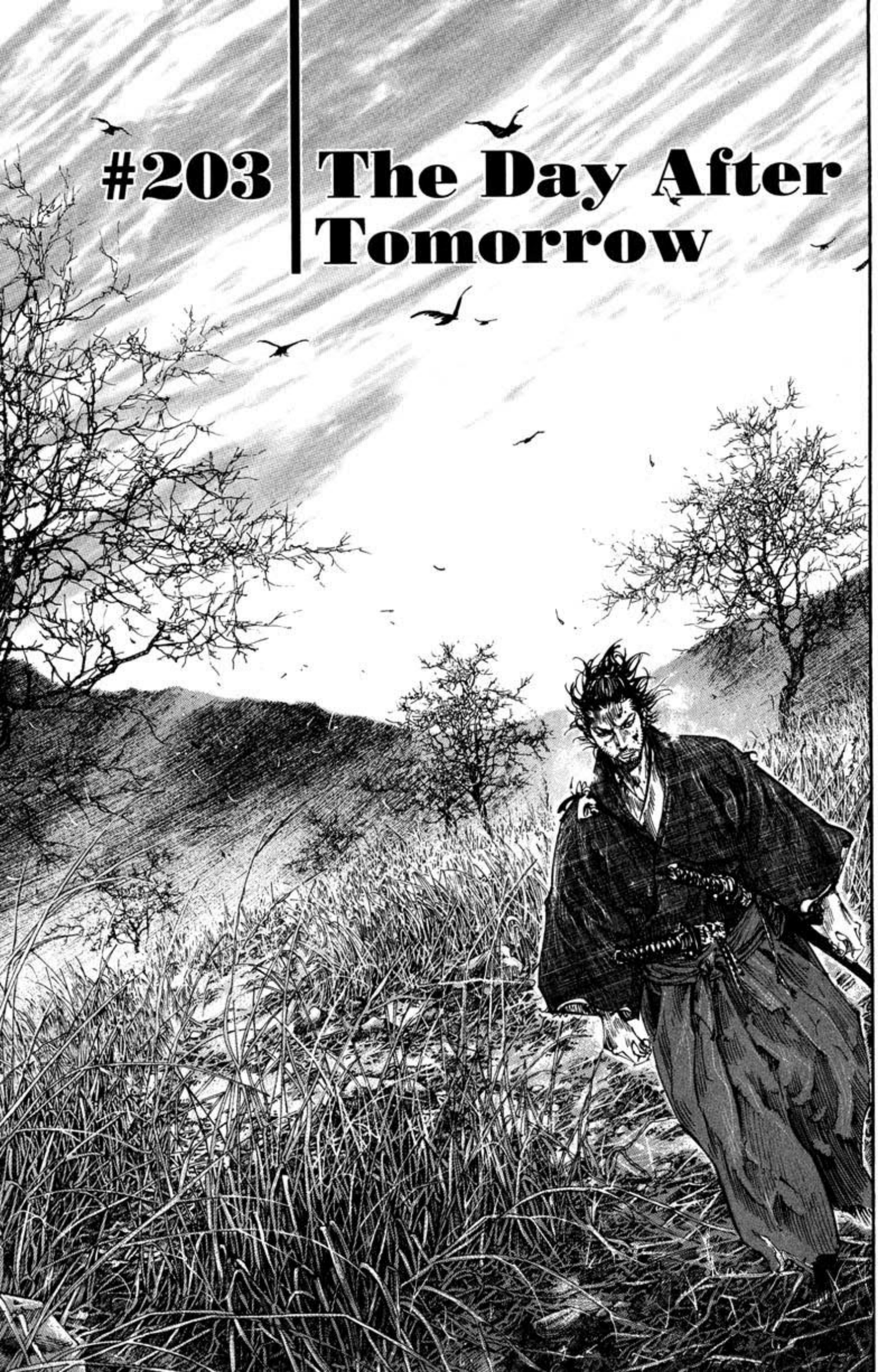
KOJIRŌ DOESN'T CARE FOR YOUR SCHOOL...

WHAT ...!?
YOU TRY TO INTIMIDATE US WITH YOUR NUMBERS ...
WHO'D WANT TO BE A GUEST OF SUCH PEOPLE...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN!?

...
THAT'S WHAT HE SAYS.
"I ABSOLUTELY REFUSE."

Vagabond

(ARF.)


#203
The Day After Tomorrow

...

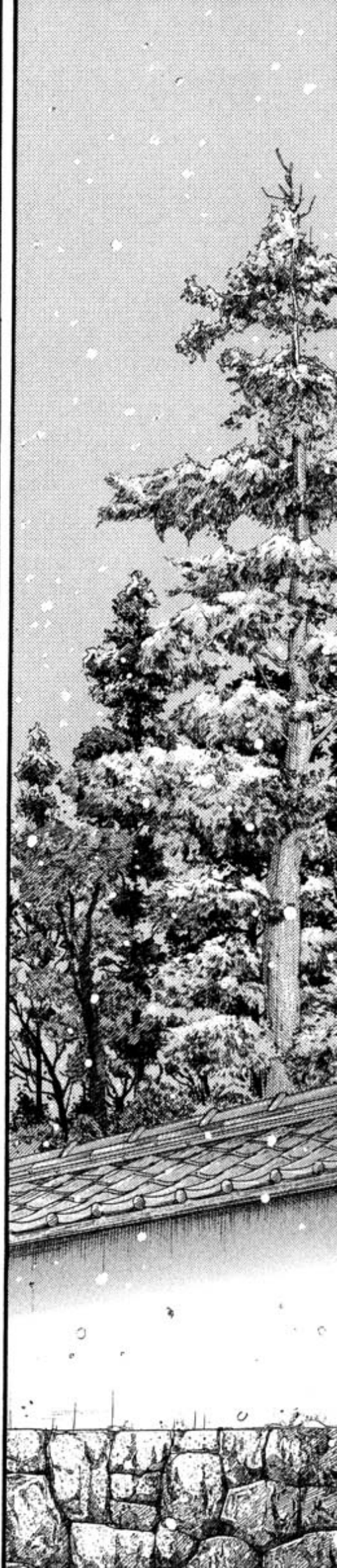
...

HE REFUSED ...

WHAT DID I JUST BLURT OUT?
THMP-THMP
THMP-THMP

UEDA EVEN GOT DOWN ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES.
NO... THEY NEED US!

一成



LET'S GO, KOJIRŌ.
THEY HAVE TO GIVE IN!
THEY'LL BEG US TO RECON-SIDER.

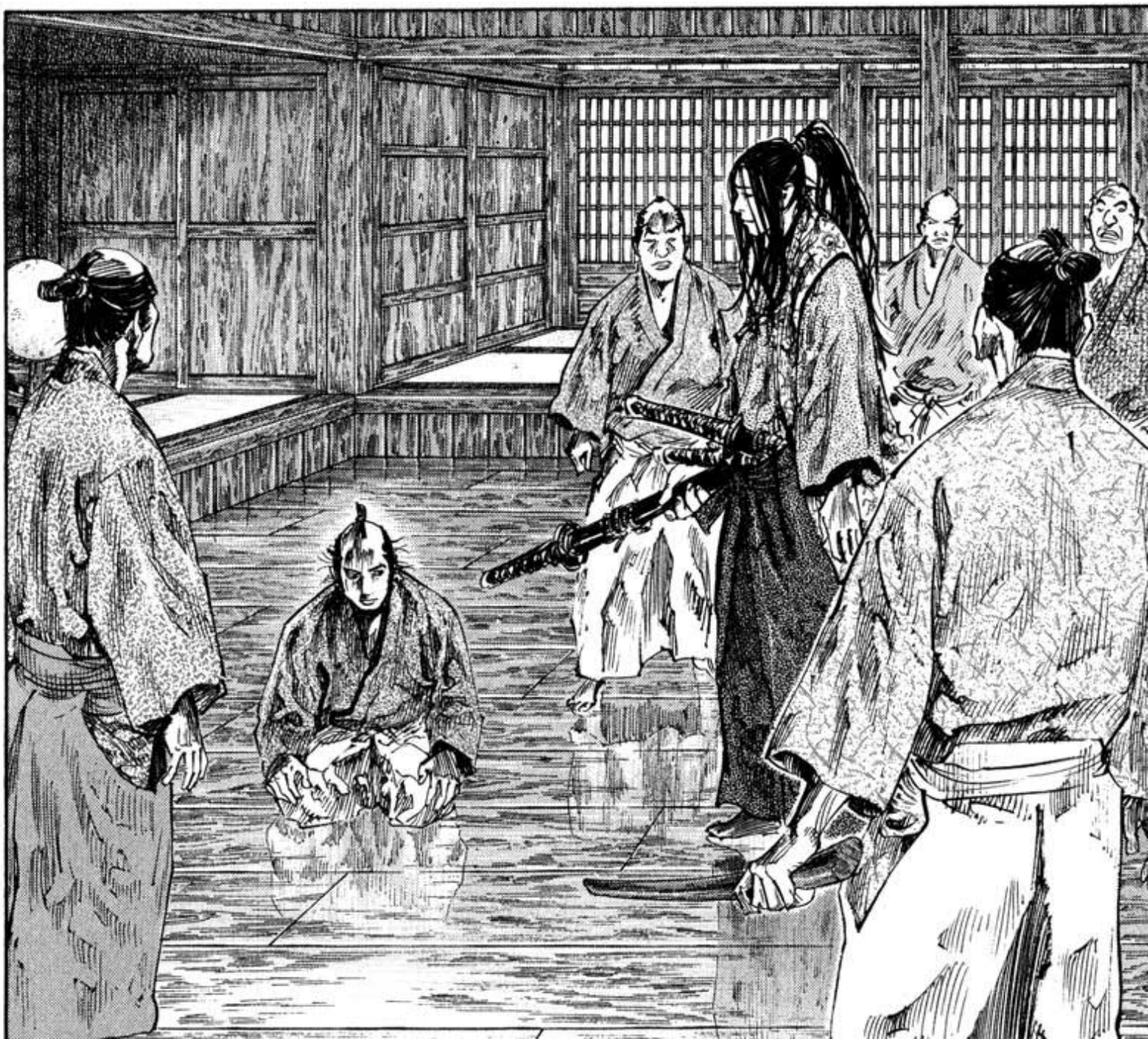
YOU DISCIPLES OF THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL MAY BE STRONG AND MIGHTY...
...BUT YOU MUST LEARN THE PROPER WAY TO ASK A FAVOR OF SOME-ONE.
IT'S NO WONDER KOJIRŌ'S UPSET.
COME ON.

ASK US TO RECONSIDER.
LET'S GO, KOJIRŌ!
STOP US FROM GOING!

KLINK
...!!
.....
C-COME NOW.
I KNOW YOU'RE UPSET, BUT LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY!
SWP

GASP!
GULP
FWCH
...
FWCH
KCHK
HM.
FWCH

WHAT
...!?



CAN HE TELL UEDA'S THE STRONG-EST MAN HERE?
WHY ELSE WOULD HE APPROACH A MAN WHO'S DOWN ON HIS KNEES.
DOES HE WANT TO FIGHT UEDA?
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING !?
UHHH ...
UMM ...
HEY, KOUJIRŌ, I'M ASKING YOU A QUESTION!
TMP
HUH?
ANSWER ME!
!

AUHH...
FSH

WAIT TWO DAYS...
KOJIRŌ...
GULP...
ONCE IT'S ALL OVER, I PROMISE TO ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE.

FSH

TNK

PLEASE WAIT UNTIL THEN.

WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO CAUSE TROUBLE, LET ALONE GET IN A SWORD-FIGHT!
COME ON, KOJIRŌ!
COME ON.
LET'S HAVE A REST HERE, WHY DON'T WE?
AUHH.
YES, I WISH THEY'D APOLOGIZE, TOO!
WAHH!
SHOVE
AUHH
THMP-THMP
THMP-THMP
SO YOU DON'T LIKE THEIR ATTITUDE AND YOU'RE STILL ANGRY.
I SEE.
AND THEY STILL HAVEN'T SHOWED US ANY HOSPITALITY.
SHOVE
AUHH.
WAHH!
WHEN HE'S UPSET, EVEN I HAVE TROUBLE.
AS YOU CAN SEE, HANDLING A GENIUS REQUIRES PATIENCE.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME US AS GUESTS, THEN ALLOW ME TO MAKE A SUG-GESTION.

AUGH...
OUCH! STOP THAT.

YES...
GOOD FOOD...
...AND SPLENDID SAKÉ...
KOJIRŌ MIGHT APPRECIATE THAT.

THAT'S WHAT KOJIRŌ WANTS.
AND WOMEN TOO...
...THAT MIGHT BE NICE.

...!!
DO AS HE SAYS.
YES!
HA
HA
HA
DELICIOUS!

FIP
HMM...
HEY!
COME ON, STOP EATING AND DRINK UP!
SAY, KOJIRŌ!
WHEW
THIS IS GREAT SAKĒ. IS IT FROM NADA?
MNCH
MNCH
NOT AT ALL LIKE MUSASHI ...
FSH
YOU CAN DRINK.
...
KOJIRŌ CAN BEAT MUSASHI.
AUHH!
THIS IS GREAT!
HA HA HA
KYOTO IS WONDERFUL! RIGHT, KOJIRŌ?

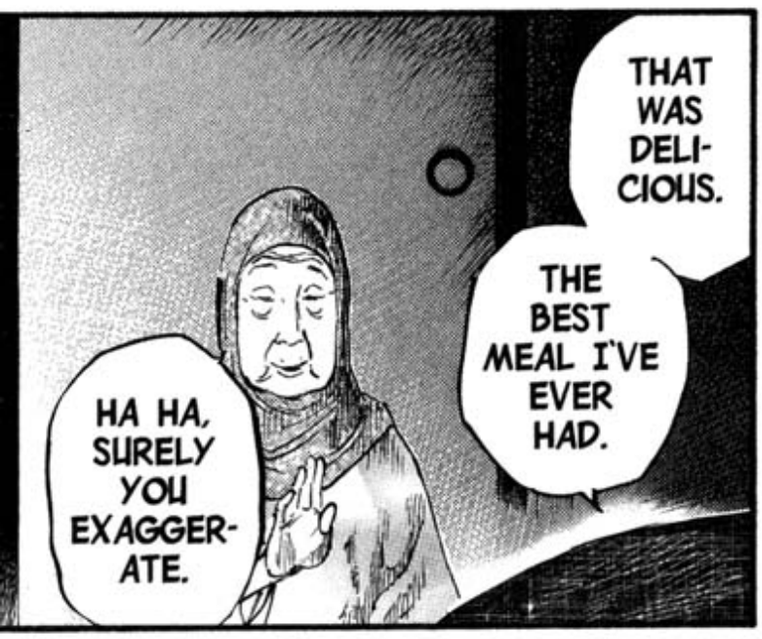
I THINK MIIKE...
DO YOU DOUBT ME?
...WOULD HAVE AGREED WITH ME.

I NEED YOU TO WORK WITH ME.
...UNTIL MUSASHI IS KILLED THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW...
FUJIIE.
TA-GAYA.
HORI-KAWA.
KU-RANDO.
YOICHI.

DON'T INTER-FERE WITH MY PLAN.
THE TEN SWORDSMEN OF THE YOSHIOKA MUST NOT...
AZUMA.
FP
...
WELL...
OUR NUMBERS ARE NO LONGER TEN...
...

ONCE IT'S ALL OVER...
FIP
MNCH
MNCH
...YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT TO THOSE TWO MEN.

DO YOU DRINK, MUSASHI?
NOT REALLY.


THAT WAS DELI-CIOUS.
THE BEST MEAL I'VE EVER HAD.
HA HA, SURELY YOU EXAGGER-ATE.

I'M EMBAR-RASSED TO SAY I CAN'T HANDLE IT...
YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY TOLD ME THAT.

I SEE...

I'M BEING VERY SINCERE.
NO...

I WILL SHARPEN YOUR SWORD...
MUSASHI...
THE DAY AFTER TOMOR-ROW...
I DON'T THINK SO...
THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN AVOID THIS FIGHT THAT'S TO OCCUR THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW ?
I CAN'T BELIEVE A GENTLE MAN LIKE YOU COULD ACTUALLY CUT SOME-ONE DOWN...
OH, DEAR ...
THEY USED TO CALL ME A DEMON BACK HOME.
GENTLE...

Vagabond

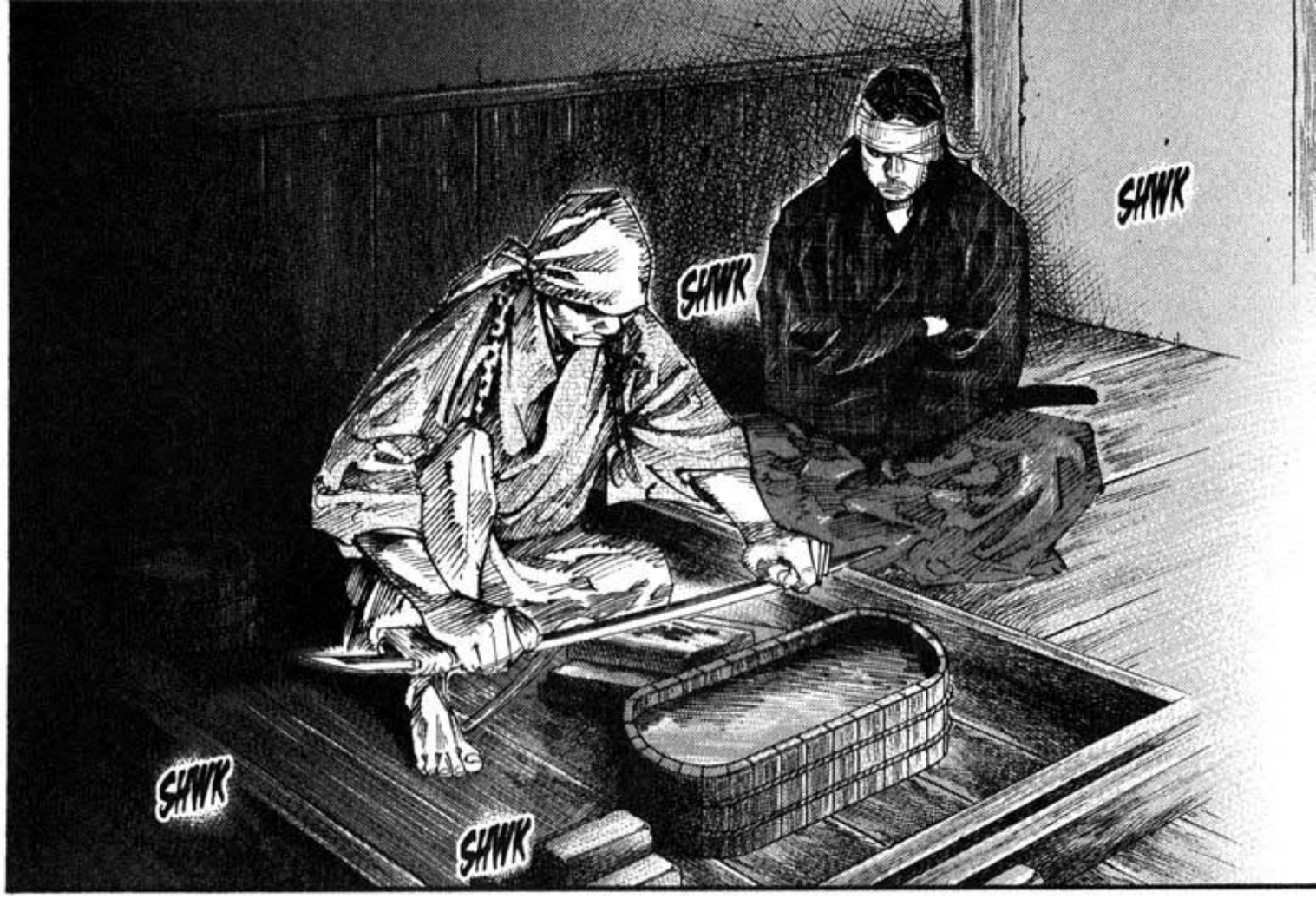
ごちそうさまでした
(THANK YOU FOR
YOUR HOSPITALITY.)

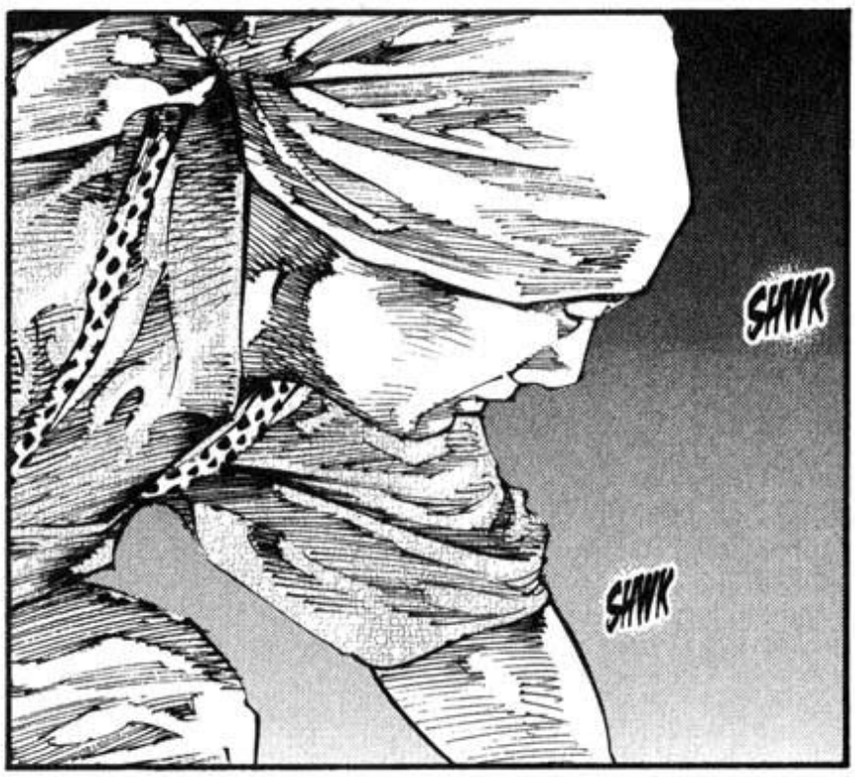
NOW...
NOW I WON'T...
...HAVE TO FIGHT ANYMORE.

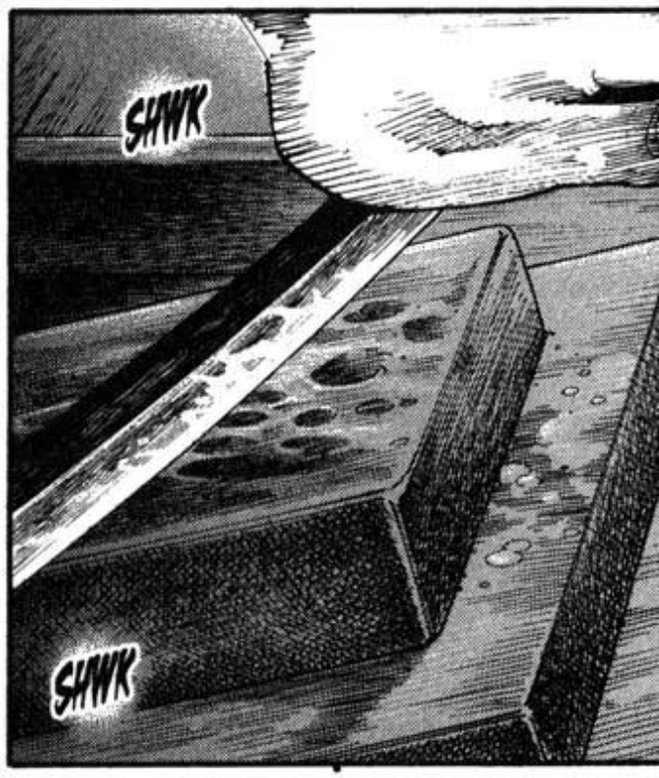
I'M THROUGH WITH IT...
...THIS SPIRAL OF DEATH AND KILLING.

WHY DID I RECALL THAT MEMORY?

#204 Sword Sharpening


SHWK
SHWK
SHWK
SHWK
SHWK


SHWK
SHWK


SHWK
SHWK

SHWK
SHWK

HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE YOU CUT DOWN?
...
POOR THING...
THIS SWORD IS PAST THE POINT OF EXHAUS-TION.
HM?
...
...
HOW MANY ?
BRR
...

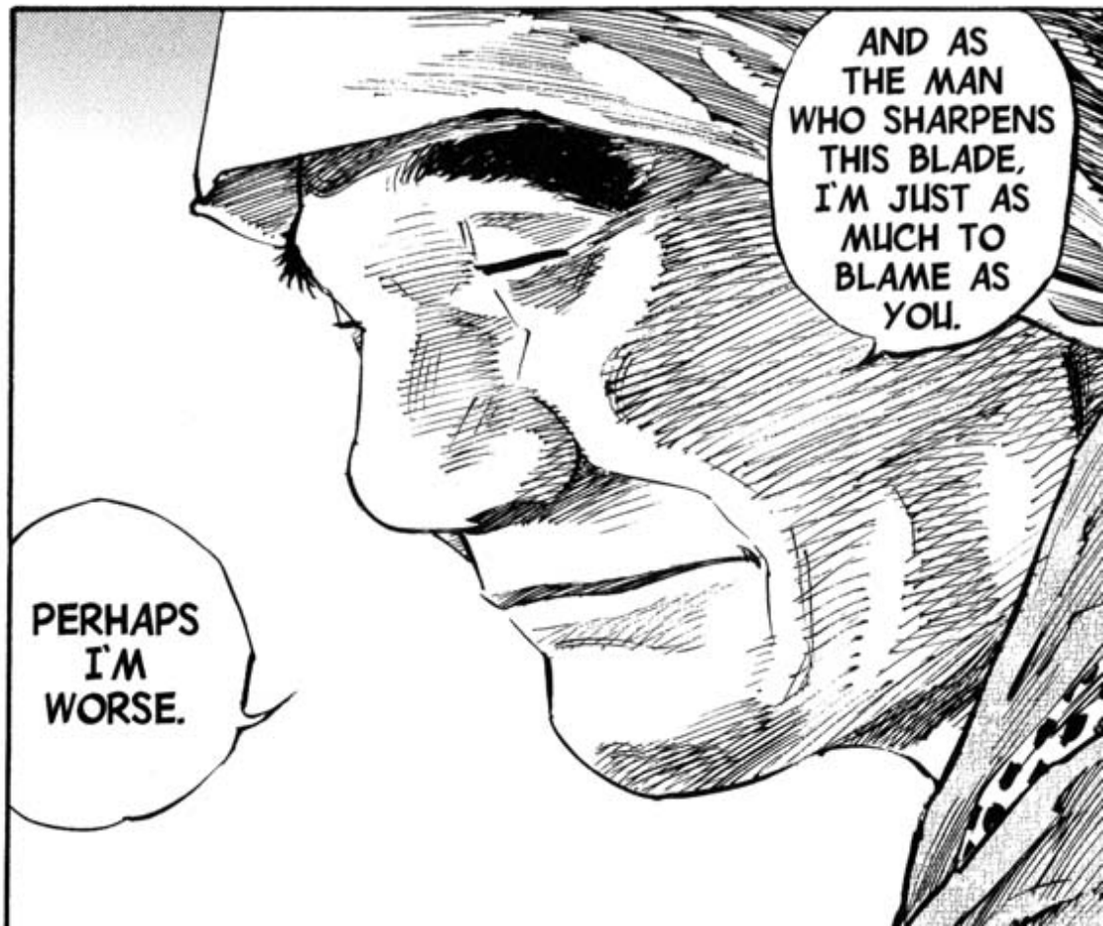
ACTUALLY, I IMAGINE IT DOES MORE HARM THAN GOOD.
A FIGHTER SWINGING SOMETHING LIKE THIS AROUND.
IT'S DANGEROUS.

HM?

HMM...
WHETHER YOU LOSE OR WIN SUCH A DUEL...
...IT DOES THE WORLD NO GOOD.

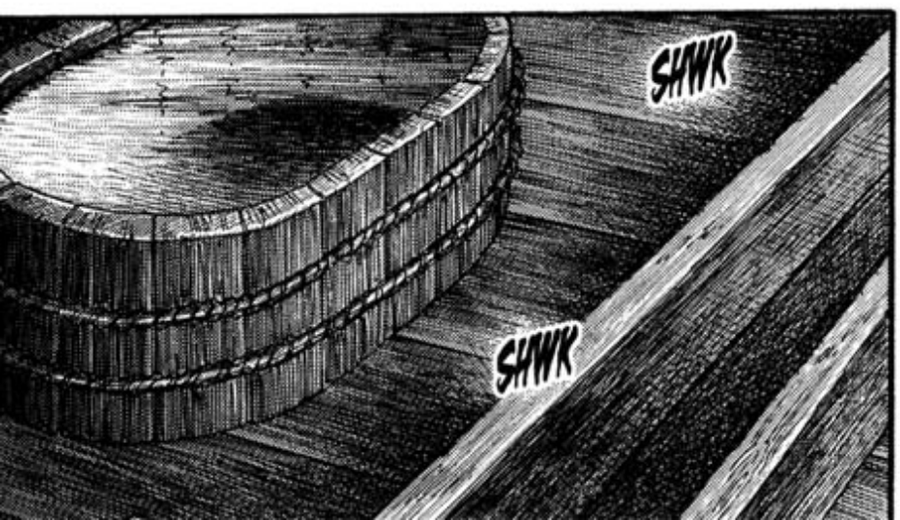
HA HA...
SPLSH

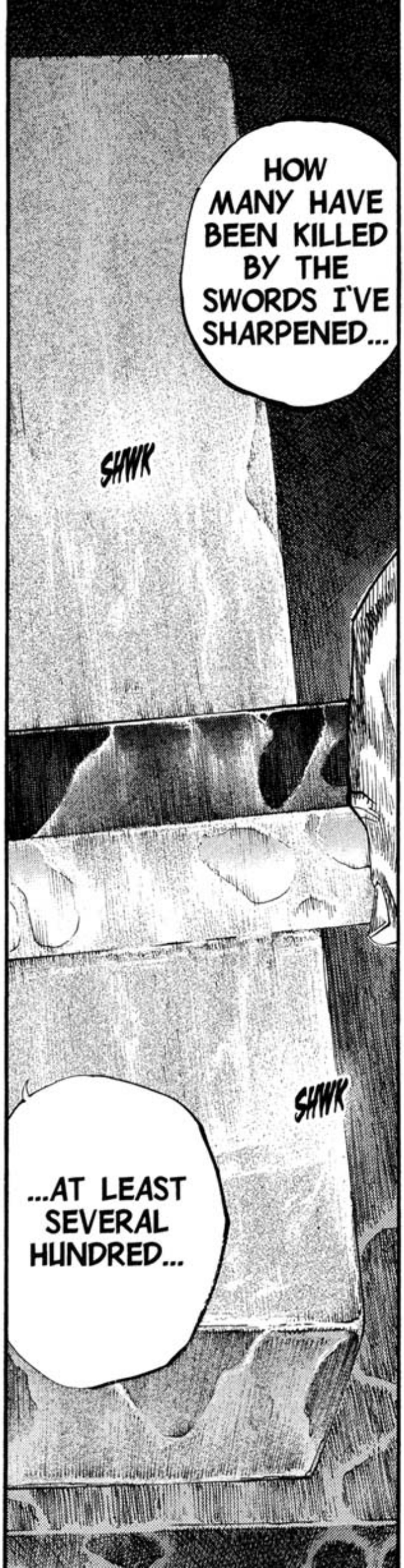
...


AND AS THE MAN WHO SHARPENS THIS BLADE, I'M JUST AS MUCH TO BLAME AS YOU.
PERHAPS I'M WORSE.

I'VE RETIRED, AND YET HERE I AM AT MY STONE.
SHWK
...SHARPENING A LETHAL SWORD.
TO MAKE YOUR CUTS ALL THE MORE CLEAR.
SHWK

I CAN'T IMAGINE DOING SOMETHING MORE HEINOUS.


SHWK
SHWK

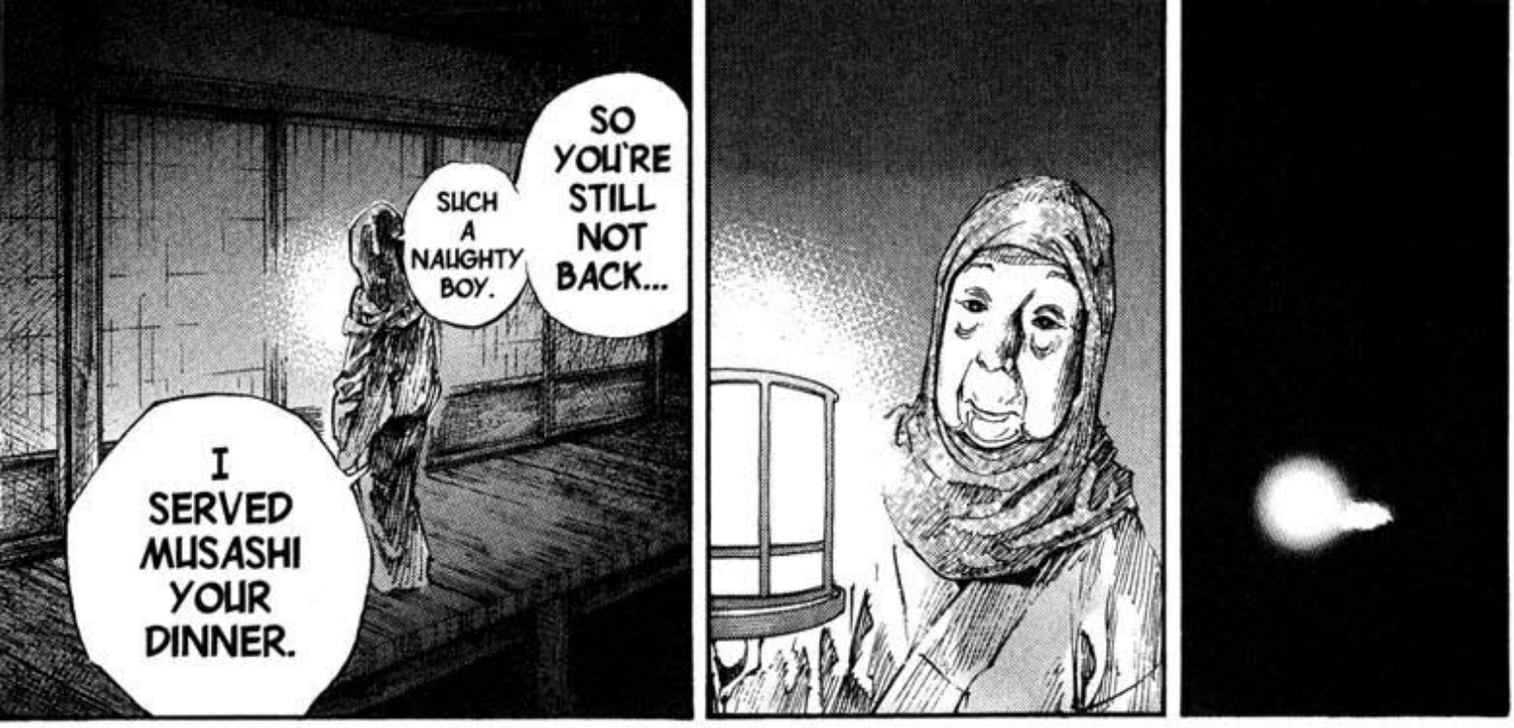

HOW MANY HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THE SWORDS I'VE SHARPENED...
SHWK
SHWK
...AT LEAST SEVERAL HUNDRED...

YOU WON'T SHARPEN THE GREAT TOKUGAWA IEYASU'S SWORD...
YET...
...YOU SIT THERE AND SHARPEN THE SULLIED SWORD OF AN UNKNOWN SWORDSMAN LIKE ME?

I HEARD YOU REFUSED TO SHARPEN A SWORD OF THE TOKU-GAWA'S.

WHY?

.....


I SERVED MUSASHI YOUR DINNER.
SUCH A NAUGHTY BOY.
SO YOU'RE STILL NOT BACK...

BUT HERE'S A SNACK FOR YOU, KOJIRŌ...

I'M SO DRUNK!
HA
HA

HA HA HA. STOP THAT, IT'S CRASS.
AUHH.
BELCH
TAP TAP
HUH?

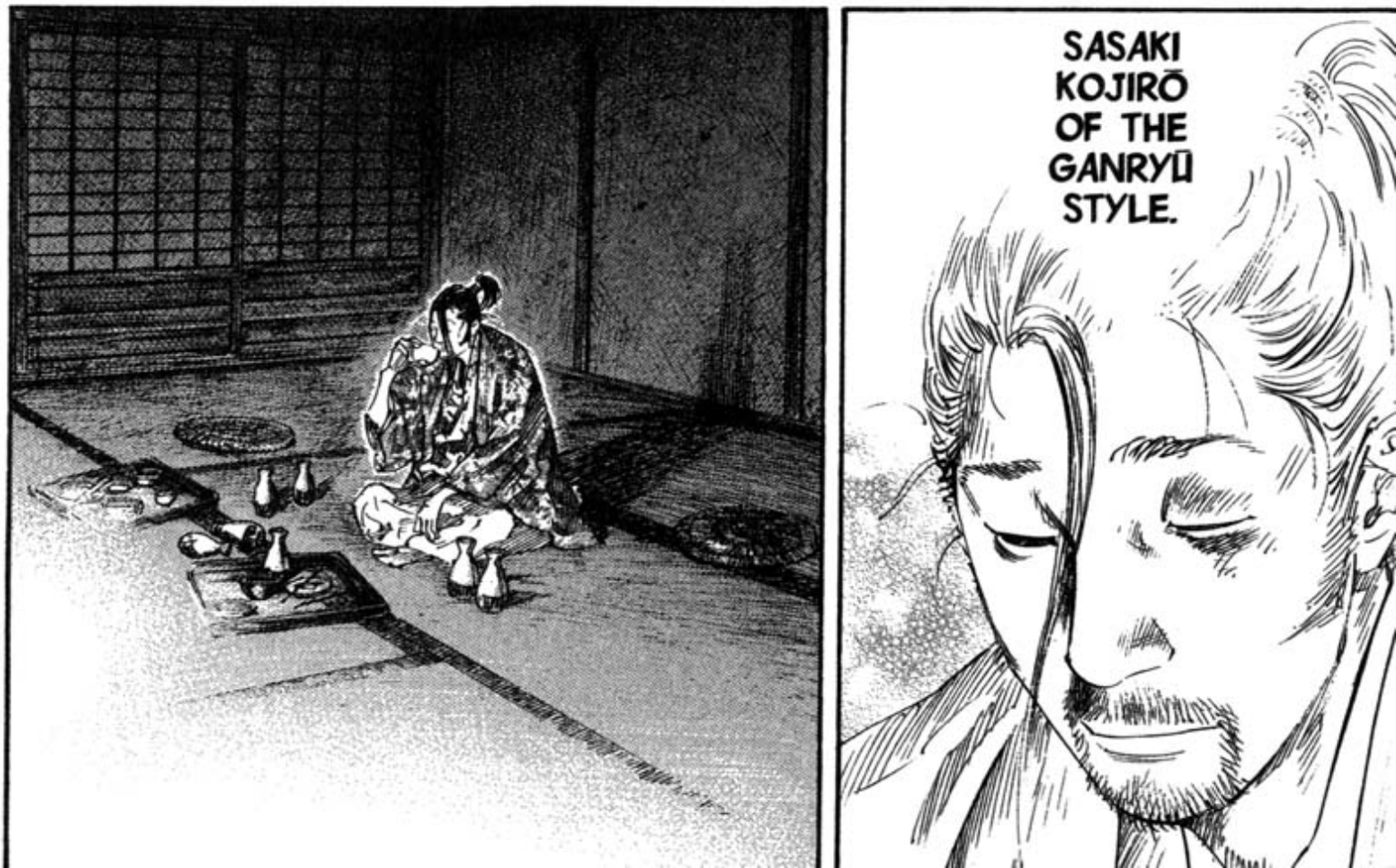
FIP
I THOUGHT I COULD HOLD MY OWN, BUT I CAN'T KEEP UP WITH YOU.
YOU REALLY CAN DRINK.

I HAVE THIS FRIEND I GREW UP WITH NAMED TAKEZŌ.
HE'S CALLED MUSASHI NOW.
HE'S SO STRONG.
BUT CAN'T DRINK A LICK.
TOO BAD YOU CAN'T TALK.
JUST BETWEEN THE TWO OF US...
THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO TELL YOU...

MNCH
YOU'RE NOT AT ALL LIKE TAKEZŌ.
YOU CAN HOLD YOUR LIQUOR.
EVEN IIEDA FEARS YOU, BUT YOU'RE SO RELAXED AND CAREFREE.
AHH!
GO AHEAD, TAKE IT.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU CAN STILL EAT!
MNCH
MNCH
PROOT
HM?
WHAT'S WRONG?
HA HA HA. STOP IT!
THE SMELL.
I CAN'T STAND IT!!

PPRROO!
HA HA!
I'M IN TEARS.
NOT AGAIN.
PEE-YEW.
AUHH!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO FARTED!

KOJIRŌ... SO THIS IS SASAKI KOJIRŌ.
...
HMM
HA HA HA
SOMEONE SHOW US WHERE THE BATHROOM IS!!
HEY!
...
THE BATH-ROOM?


SASAKI KOJIRŌ OF THE GANRYŪ STYLE.

TAKEZŌ.

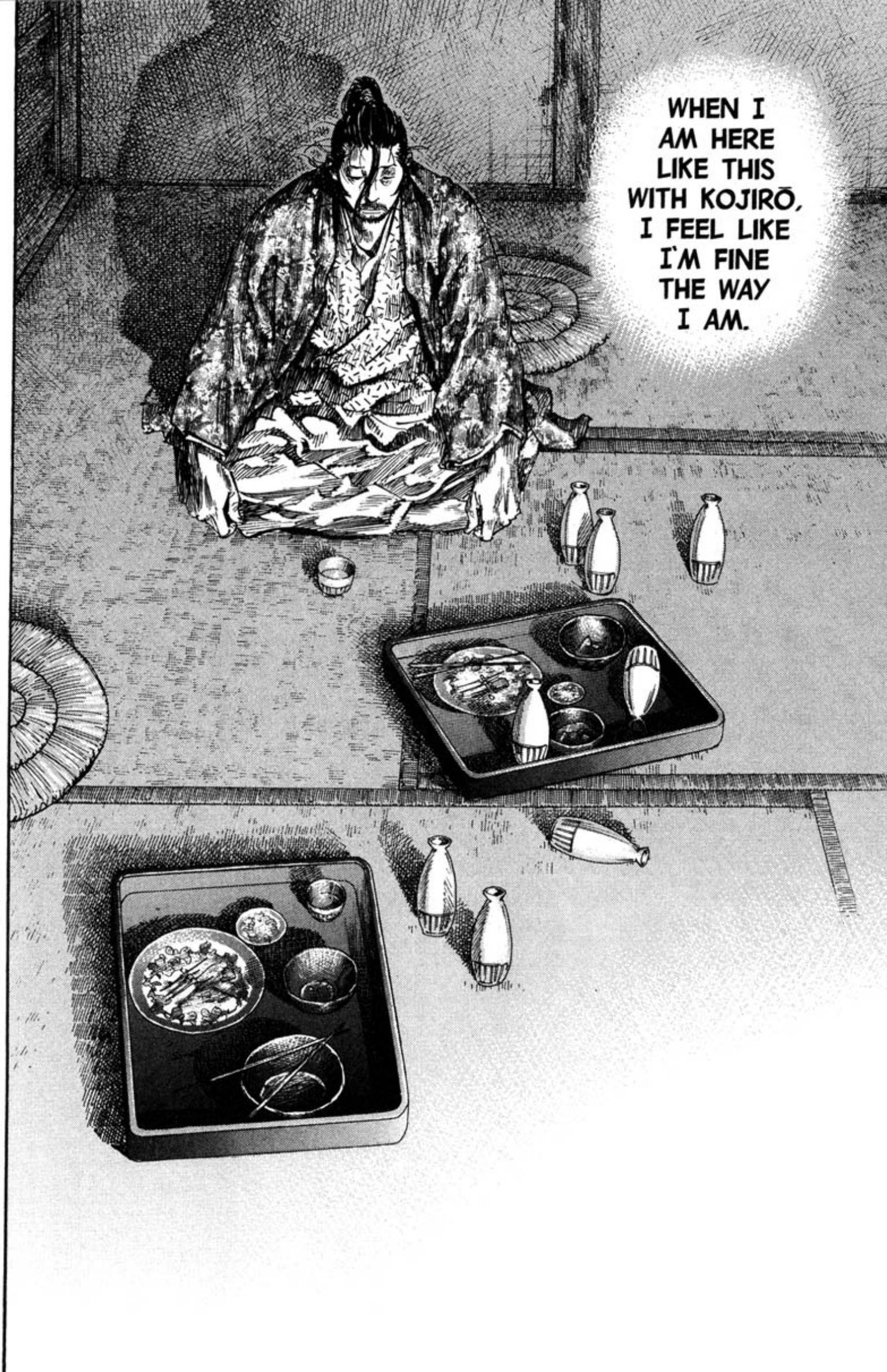
ARE WE FRIENDS?

I GET ANXIOUS WHEN I THINK ABOUT YOU.

GET WORKED UP...

...AND FEEL PATHETIC.

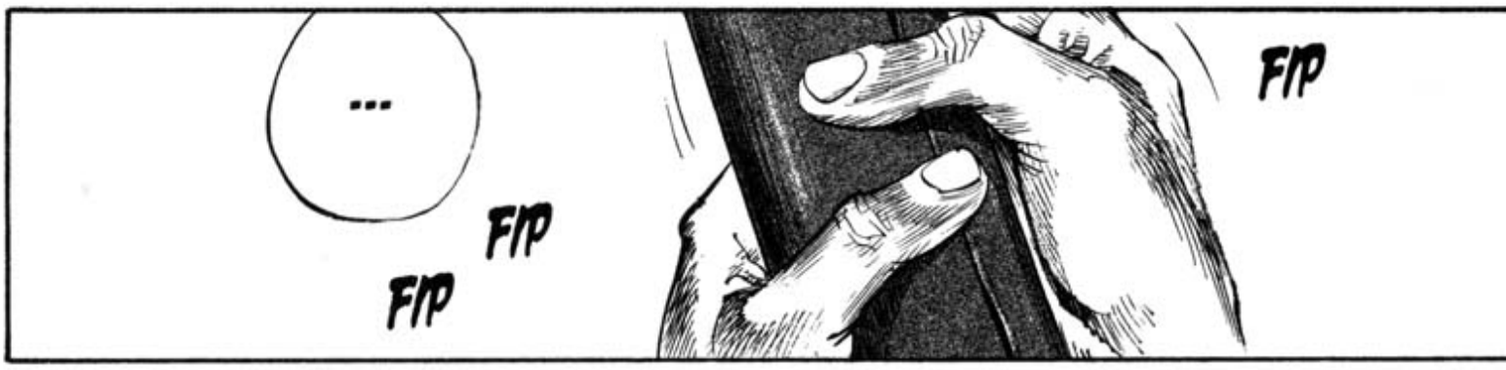
ARE WE REALLY FRIENDS ?


WHEN I AM HERE LIKE THIS WITH KOJIRŌ, I FEEL LIKE I'M FINE THE WAY I AM.

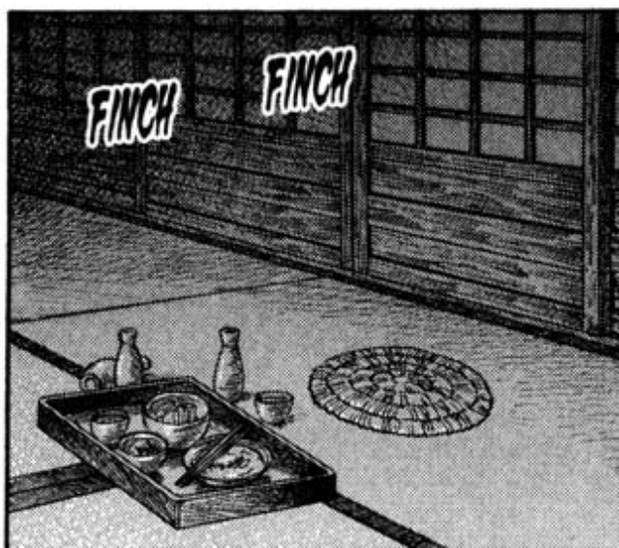
THAT'S RIGHT!
I ALMOST FORGOT!
...
WHAT'S TAKING HIM SO LONG?
MUST BE TAKING A CRAP.
THIS IMPORTANT DOCUMENT!
I'M SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG.
THAT SAMURAI...
HE NEVER TOLD ME HIS NAME.

I CAN DELIVER THIS TO THE REAL KOJIRŌ...

I CAN DO WHAT YOU INTENDED...
FINALLY...


...
FIP
FIP
FIP

HUH.
HE'S BACK


FINCH
FINCH

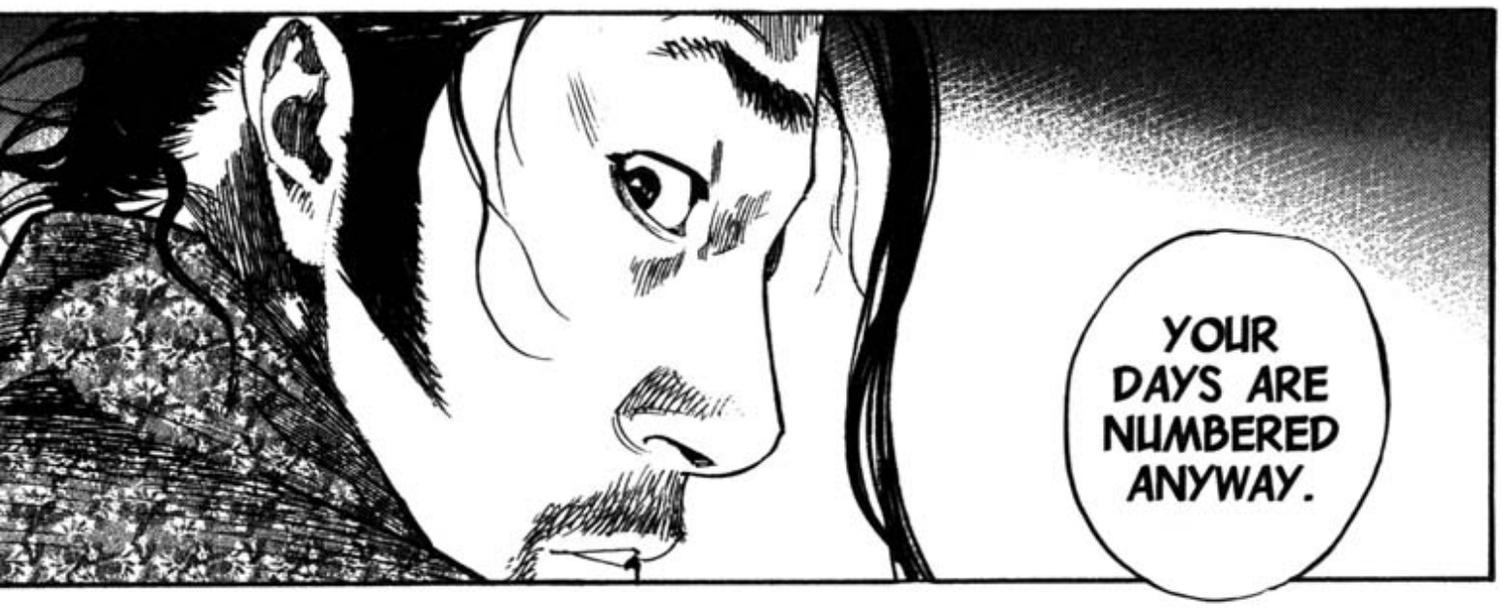
FINCH
FINCH
ZHUP

COME ON, LET'S DRINK!
WHAT TOOK YOU?

HA HA HA!!
WE'LL DRINK ALL NIGHT!

WHEW
SPLASH
SO MUCH EXCITE-MENT I CAN'T SLEEP.
HA HA. WHAT A DAY.

"SASAKI KOUJIRŌ?" GIVE ME A BREAK.
HAH.
I KNOW YOU'RE OKŌ'S PIMP.
YOU PHONY.
HUH ?
FICH
YOU GOT SOME NERVE.

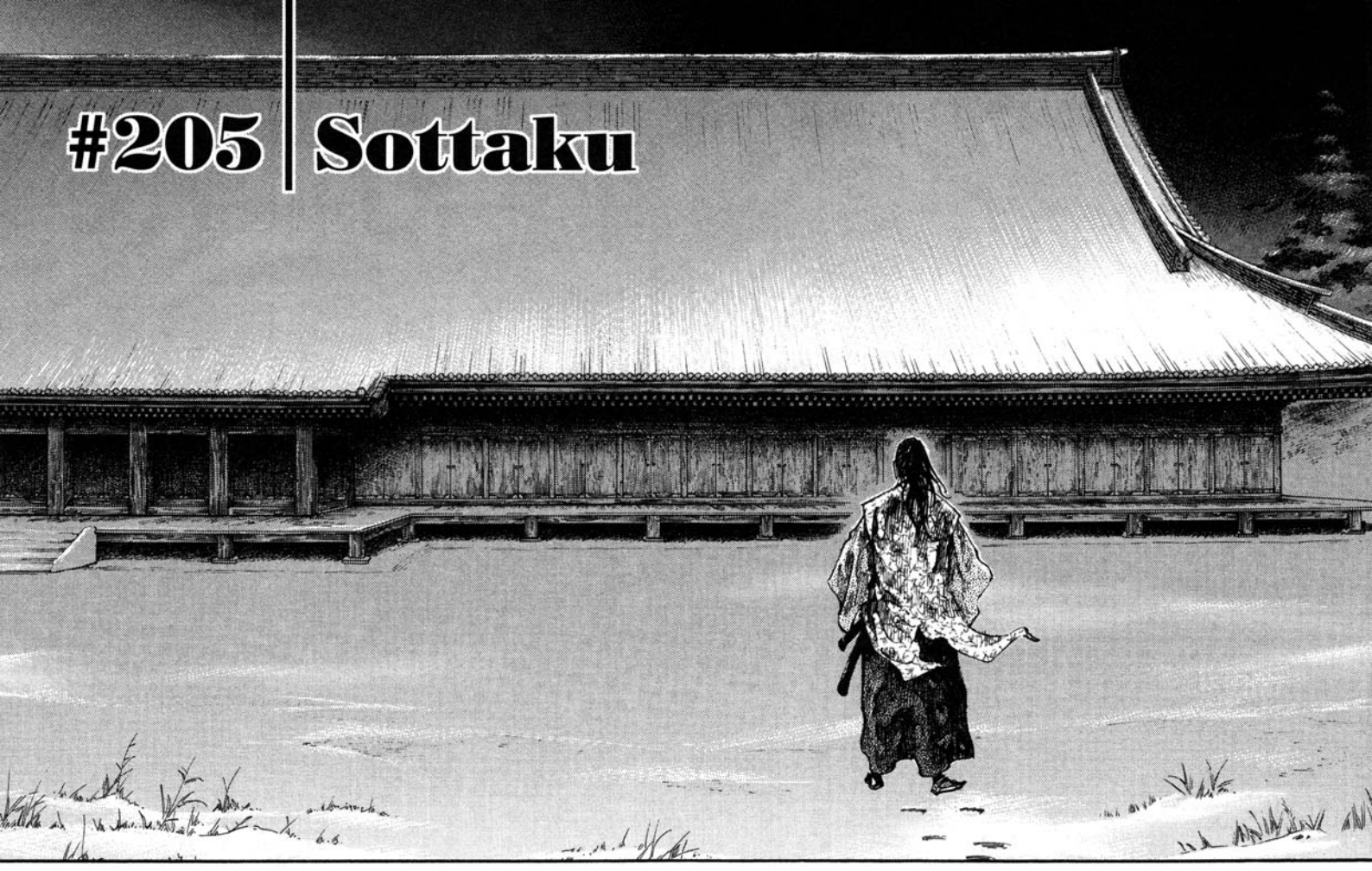

YOUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED ANYWAY.

MUSASHI...

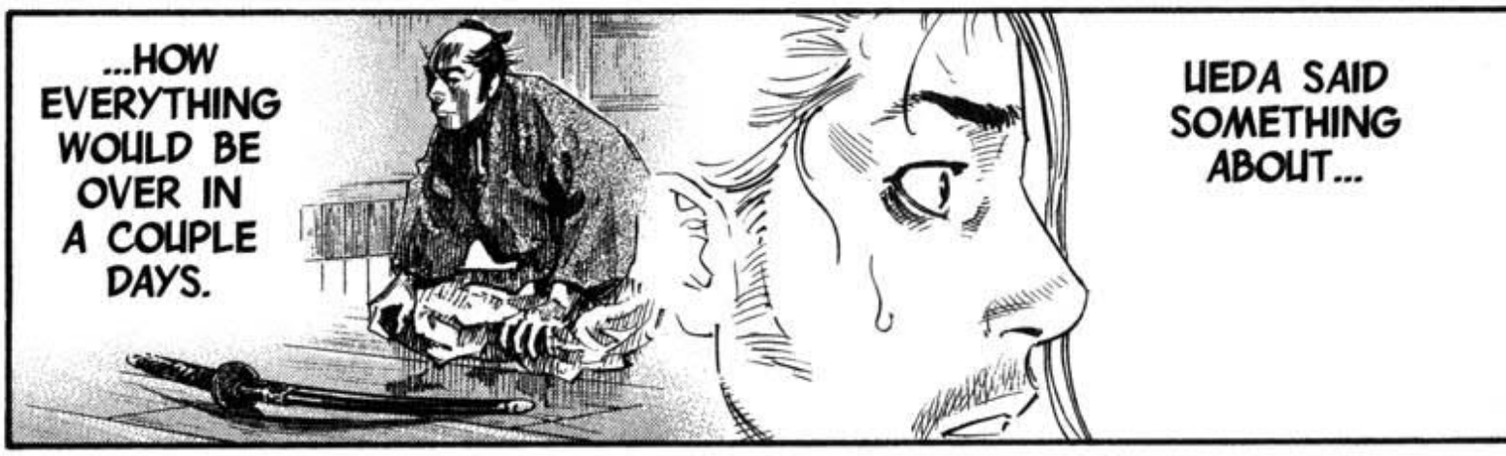
YOU DON'T THINK YOU'LL DIE IN THE DUEL, DO YOU?
SHWK
SHWK
SHWK
WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AFTER YOUR DUEL WITH DENSHICHIRŌ?
.....
I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT...
WHETHER I'LL DIE..
...OR LIVE.

Vagabond

(MNCH MNCH.)
(MNCH.)


#205 Sottaku

YOUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED ANYWAY.
...!?

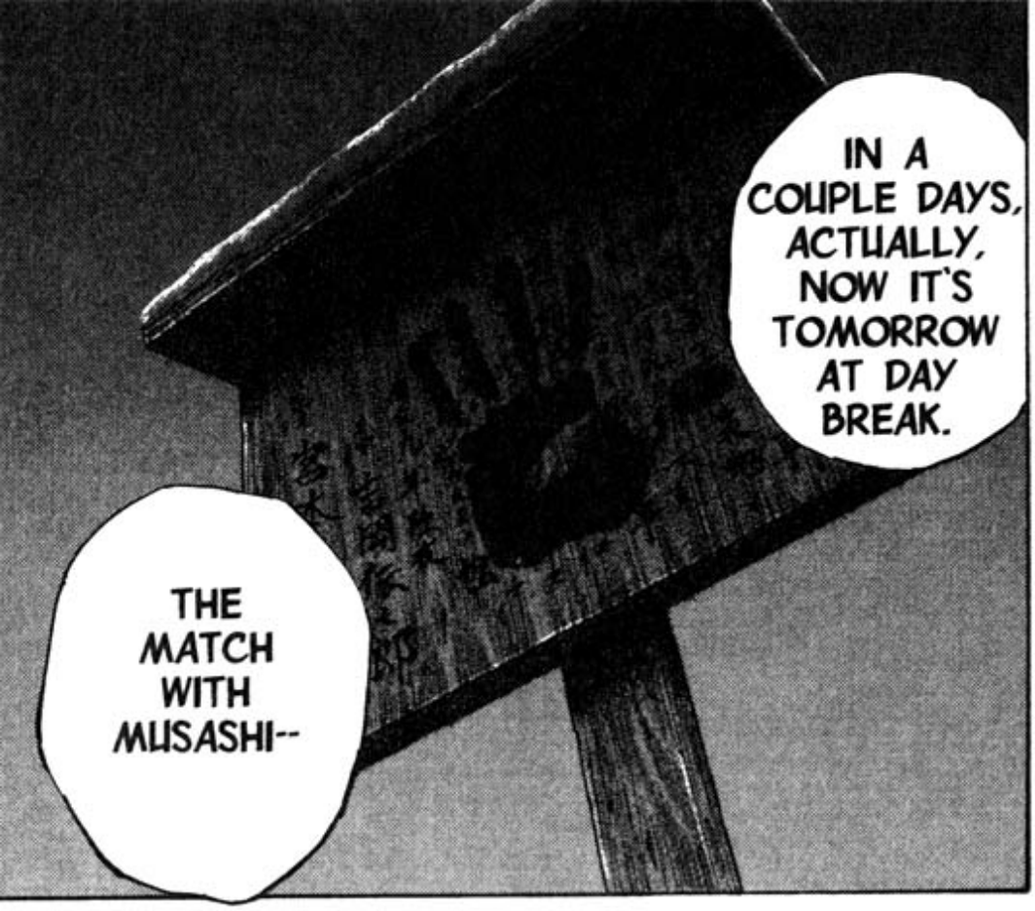

...HOW EVERYTHING WOULD BE OVER IN A COUPLE DAYS.
UEDA SAID SOMETHING ABOUT...

A STAND-IN!?

IF THEY'RE GOING TO FIGHT HIM IN TWO DAYS, WHY DID HE WELCOME KOJIRŌ AS A GUEST!?
HEY, WE NEED TO TALK!

YAWN...

HUH?


IN A COUPLE DAYS, ACTUALLY, NOW IT'S TOMORROW AT DAY BREAK.
THE MATCH WITH MUSASHI--

YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
YAWN...

DEN-SHICHIRŌ SENSEI ISN'T GOING TO FIGHT HIM.
WHY SHOULD HE?
HE'S THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL.

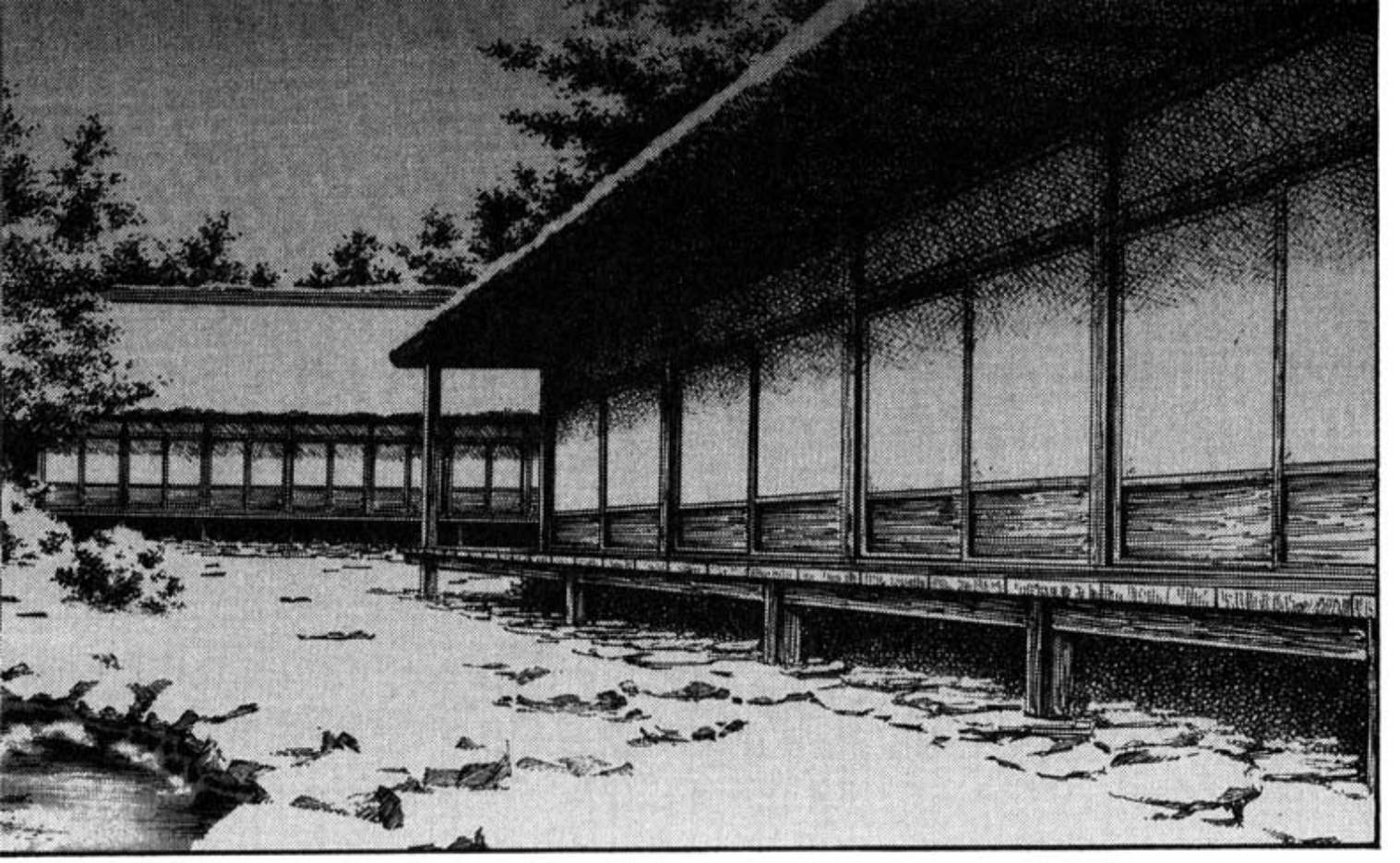
FWUMP

...
WELL, I'M GOING TO BED.

SO WE NEED A FORMIDABLE STAND-IN.
THAT'S WHERE SASAKI KOJIRŌ ENTERS THE PICTURE.
ARE YOU LISTEN-ING?

WAIT
A
MINUTE...

...KOJIRŌ!?
TAKEZŌ AGAINST...
THAT CAN'T BE...



SHWIK
SHWIK
I'VE RETIRED. THAT'S WHY I REFUSED IEYASU.
SHWIK

THE HON'AMI FAMILY HAS SHARPENED SWORDS FOR GENERA-TIONS.
SHWIK

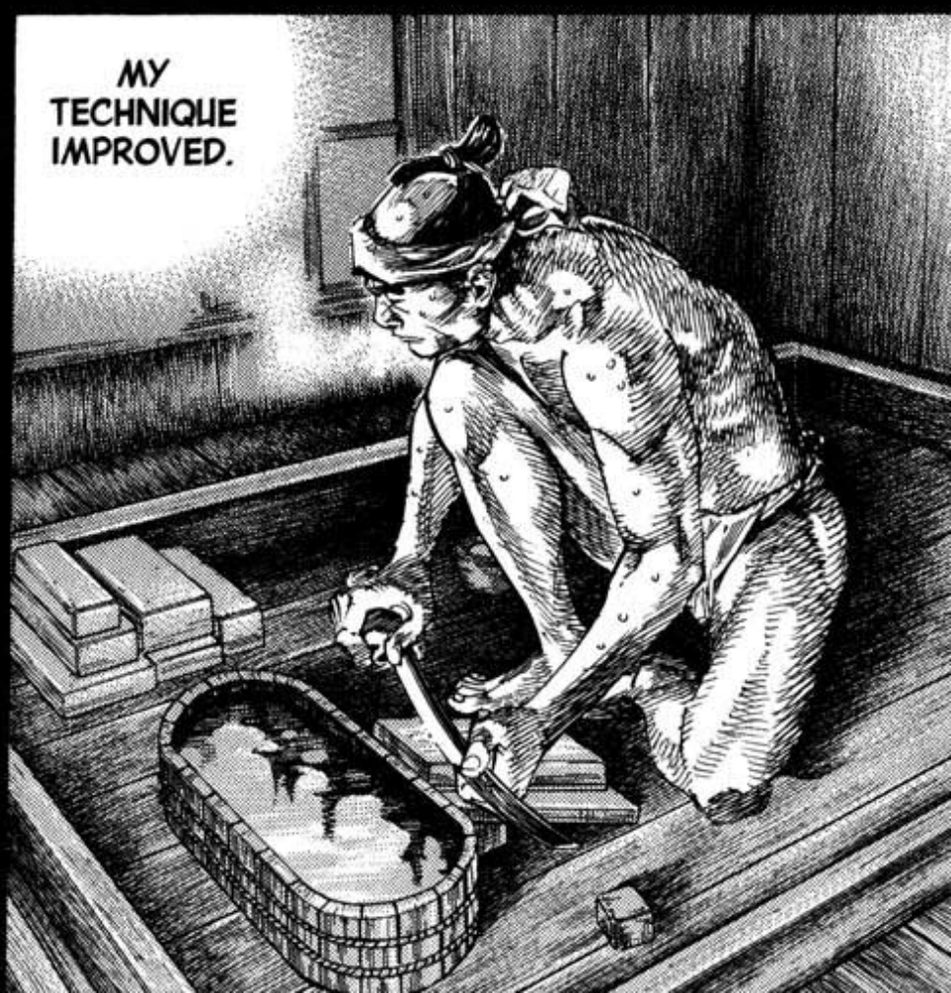
...
SHWIK
SHWIK

SHWIK
SHWIK
YOUR DISCIPLE WAS SAYING...
...HE DOESN'T KNOW WHY YOU RETIRED.
HE SAID IT WAS TOO SOON FOR YOU TO DO SO.

I'VE COME ACROSS THOUSANDS OF SWORDS...
...AND I'VE ENCOUNTERED THEIR OWNERS.
I WAS BORN A SHARPENER. I GREW UP SURROUNDED BY SWORDS.

TWENTY YEARS.
TEN YEARS.

THIRTY...

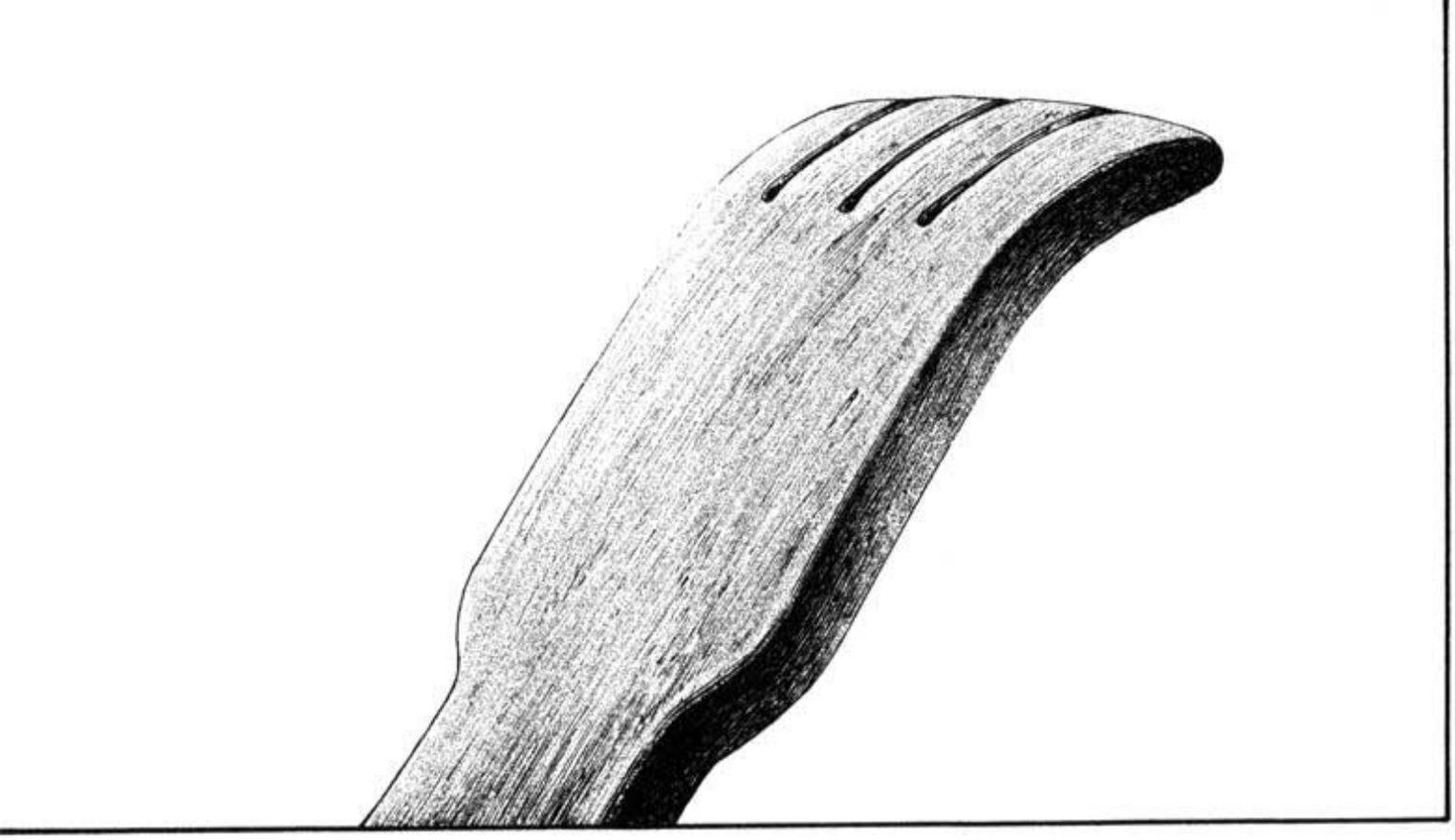

MY TECHNIQUE IMPROVED.

I IMPROVED MY CRAFT.
FIFTY YEARS.
AND EVEN FURTHER I WOULD GO...
FURTHER AND FURTHER...
THE PURITY OF THE WHITE, THE DEEPNESS OF THE BLUE...
THAT WHICH LAY DORMANT WITHIN THE STEEL...
TO AWAKEN SOMETHING FROM WITHIN THE BLADE...

A BLUENESS RICHER THAN THE SUMMER SKY.
THE SWORD WAS EVERYTHING TO ME. I MEASURED EVERYTHING BY THE SWORD...
THAT IN ITSELF IS NOT A BAD THING.
THAT'S WHAT BEAUTY IS ABOUT.
HOW-EVER...

...A SWORD IS SIMPLY A SWORD NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO TO IT.
ITS PURPOSE IS TO CUT AND KILL.
BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE OF ITS PURPOSE AS A WEAPON.
TO FORGET THAT IS TO LOSE ONE'S WAY.
I LOST SIGHT OF THE SWORD BE-CAUSE I WAS SURROUNDED BY THEM.
I WAS SO OBSESSED WITH BEAUTY.
PLIPP
I COULDN'T BE SATISFIED NO MATTER HOW MANY SWORDS I SHARPENED.
YOU KNOW, MUSASHI, IT'S QUITE STRANGE.
I ACTUALLY BELIEVED...
...IN ORDER TO MAKE A SWORD BEAUTIFUL...

..IT HAD TO CEASE BEING A SWORD.
SHWIK



I WAS OBSESSED ABOUT BECOMING INVINCIBLE-- INVINCIBLE UNDER THE SUN.

...

KRICH

I WANTED TO BE AN EXCEPTIONAL SWORDS-MAN... WAS I OVER-ZEALOUS ?

STRIVING TO BE AN UNPARALLELED FIGHTER.

?

BUT I DIDN'T GET ANY-WHERE.

THAT'S WHY I SOUGHT OUT THE WISDOM OF YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI.

HRMPH

DIDN'T I TELL YOU?

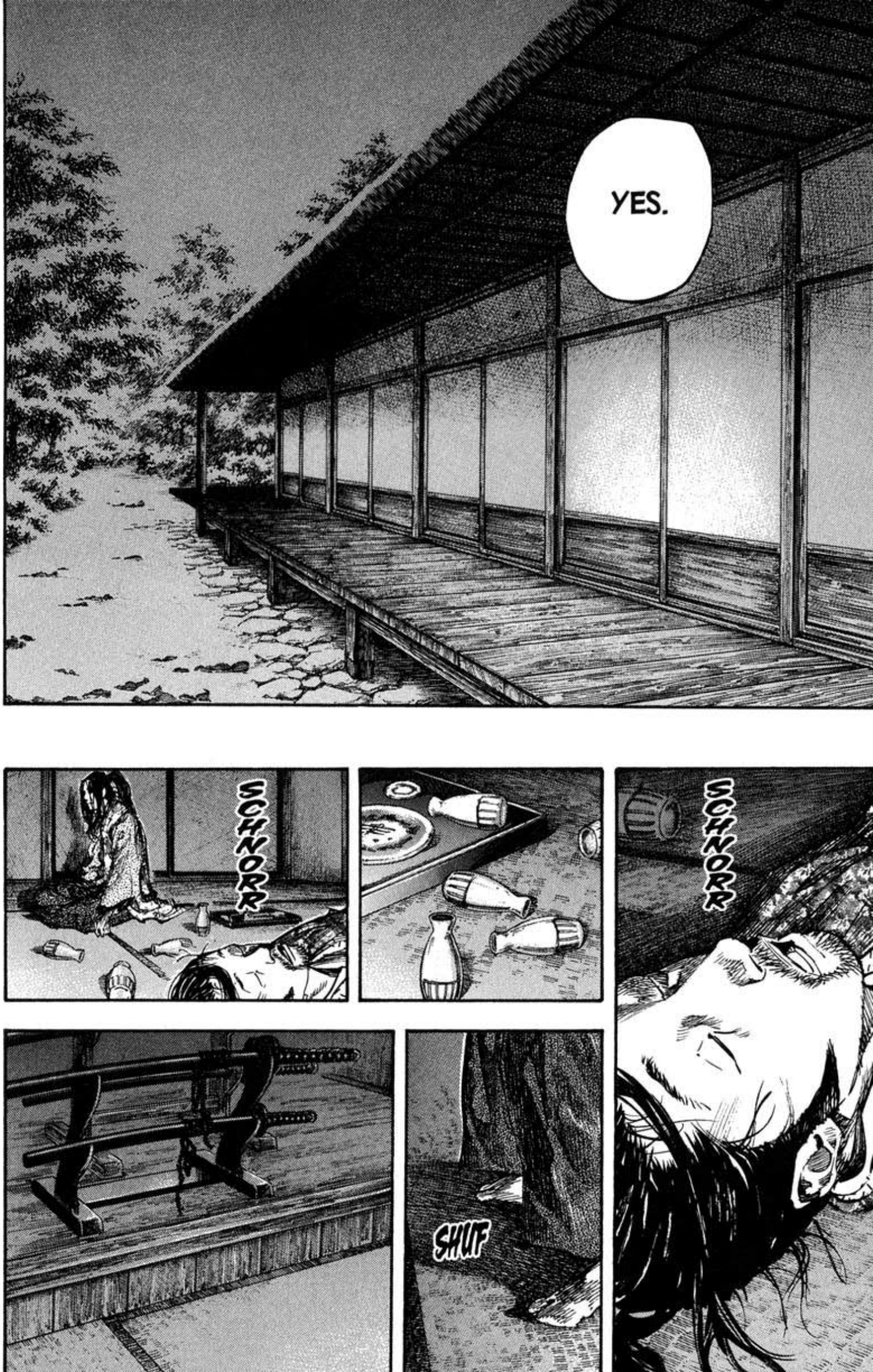
INVINCIBLE IS JUST A WORD.

HRMPH

YOU HAVE THE URGE TO WIELD A SWORD?

CAN I BORROW A SPARE SWORD?
A WOODEN PRACTICE SWORD WILL DO.

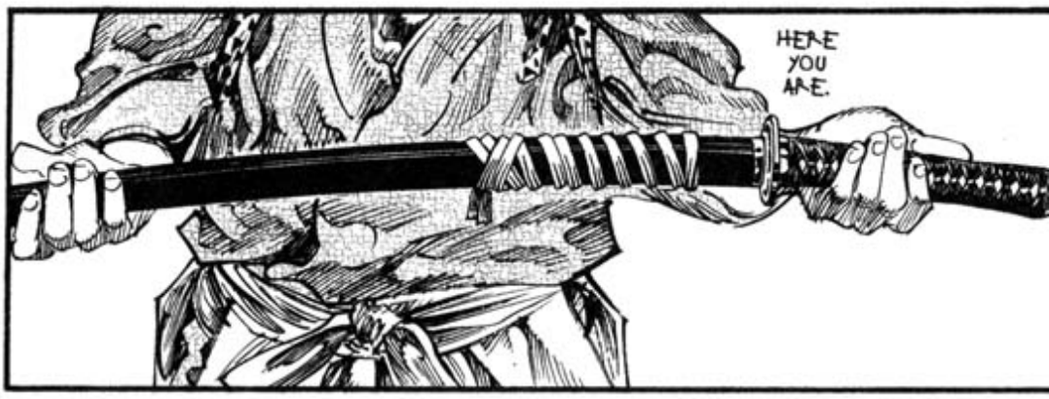
SHWIK
SHWIK
SHWIK


YES.
SCHNORR
SCHNORR
SHUF

MANY INSIST THE SWORD MEANS EVERY-THING TO THEM...
...SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS SUCH A CENTRAL PART OF THEIR EXIST-ENCE.
KLK
BUT RARE IS THE FIGHTER WHO TRULY LIVES BY THE SWORD.
HE AVOIDS THE USE OF EXTRANEOUS HUES...
AND IS ONLY INTERESTED IN FURTHERING THE DEPTH AND RICHNESS OF HIS OWN UNIQUE COLOR.
THE SWORD...

I AM ONLY INTERESTED IN SHARPENING FOR THE PURPOSES OF SUCH BEAUTY.
HIS OWN UNIQUE COLOR.
AND THAT COLOR IS BEAUTIFUL.

THANK YOU.


HERE YOU ARE.

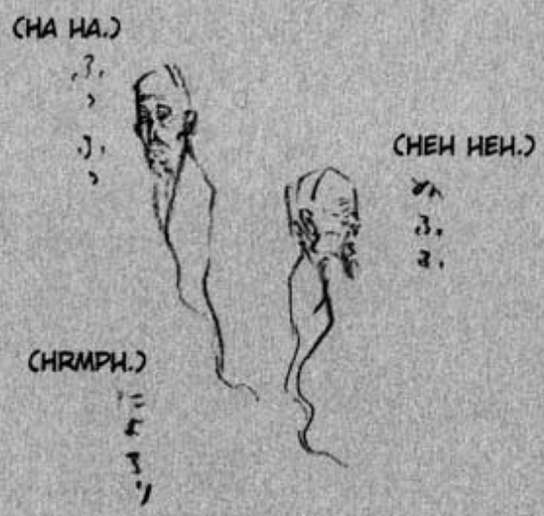
...IT'S ACCEPTABLE TO KILL, IF IT'S AN ACT COMMITTED IN PURSUIT OF SUCH BEAUTY.
AND I ALSO BELIEVE THAT...

FWISSH
YOURS IS ONLY THE SECOND SWORD I'VE SHARPENED SINCE I'VE GONE INTO RETIREMENT.

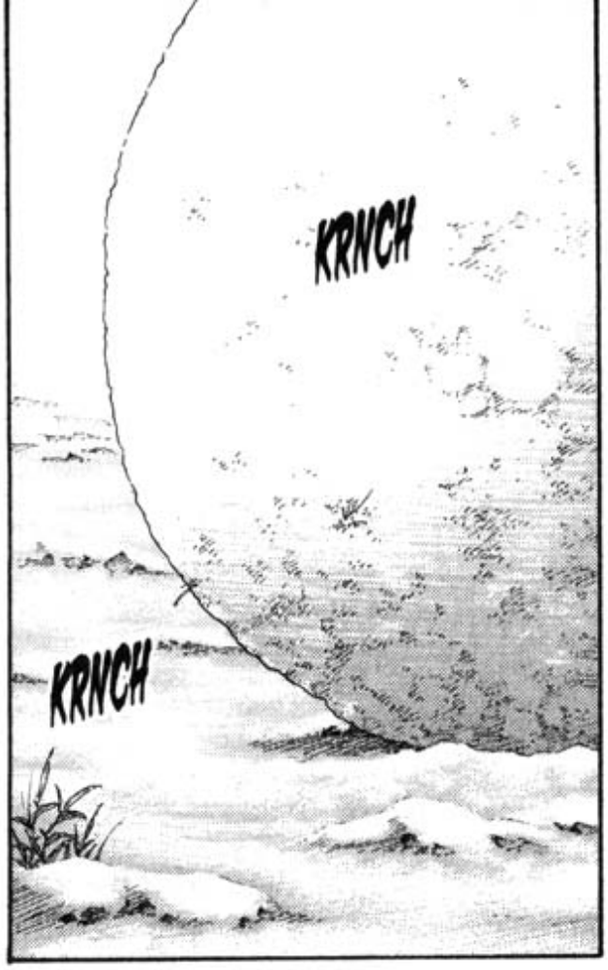
FWISH

AUHH!

Vagabond


(HA HA.)
(HEH HEH.)
(HRMPH.)

KRNCH


KRNCH
KRNCH

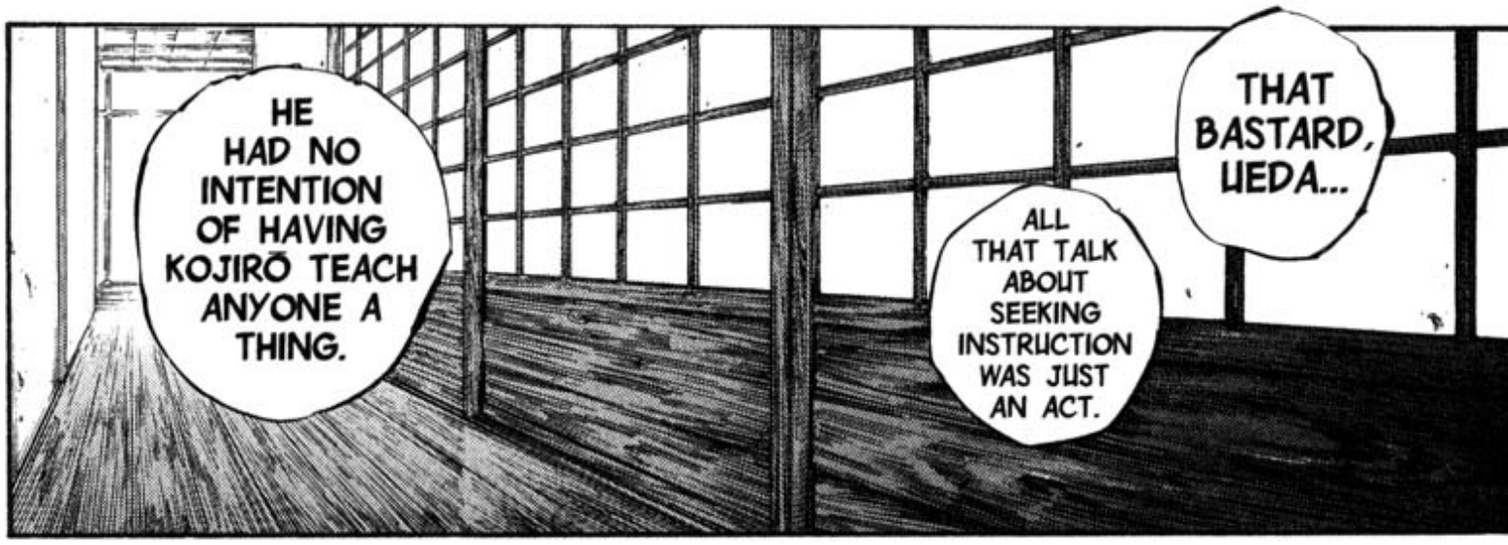
THIS IS THE MAN WHO IS ABOUT TO FIGHT THE DUEL THAT'S GOT ALL OF KYOTO'S ATTENTION?
TMP
HUP

SHUF
SHUF

ARE YOU REALLY READY FOR TOMORROW, MUSASHI?

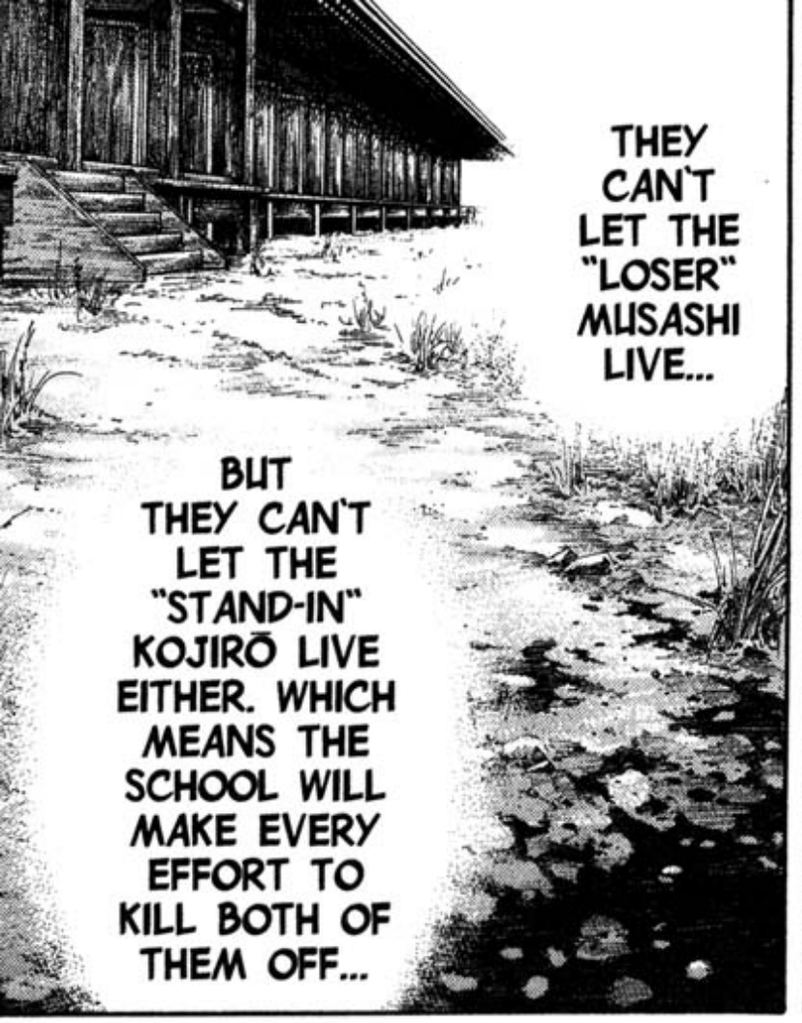
HM?

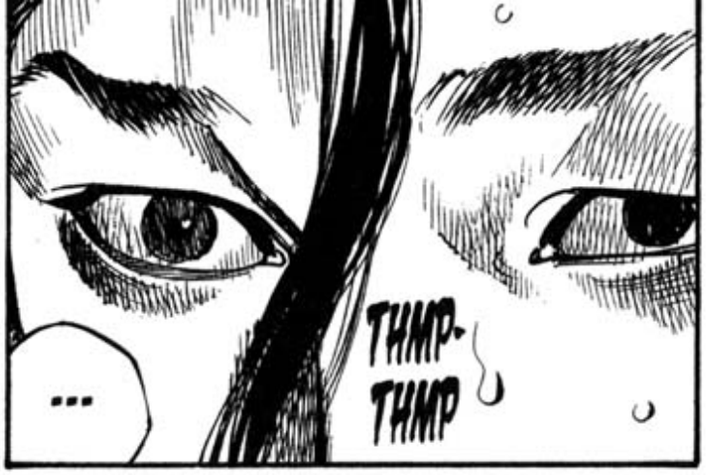
#206 | Straightforward

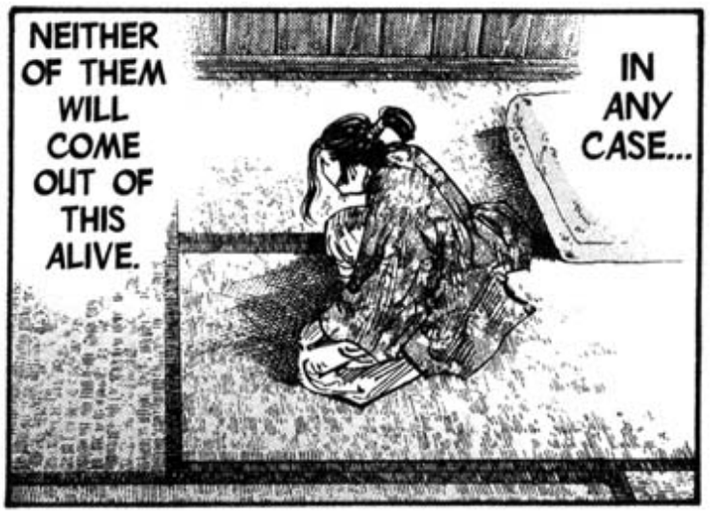

HE HAD NO INTENTION OF HAVING KOJIRŌ TEACH ANYONE A THING.
ALL THAT TALK ABOUT SEEKING INSTRUCTION WAS JUST AN ACT.
THAT BASTARD, UEDA...

WHO'S STRONGER ?

IT WAS ALL A PLOY TO PIT KOJIRŌ AGAINST TAKEZŌ...!
UGH, HEAD-ACHE ...


THEY CAN'T LET THE "LOSER" MUSASHI LIVE...
BUT THEY CAN'T LET THE "STAND-IN" KOJIRŌ LIVE EITHER. WHICH MEANS THE SCHOOL WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KILL BOTH OF THEM OFF...


...
THMP-
THMP


NEITHER OF THEM WILL COME OUT OF THIS ALIVE.
IN ANY CASE...

WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, THEY'LL WIN.
THEN THEY'LL SPREAD WORD OF HOW DENSHICHIRŌ FOUGHT AND WON THE MATCH.

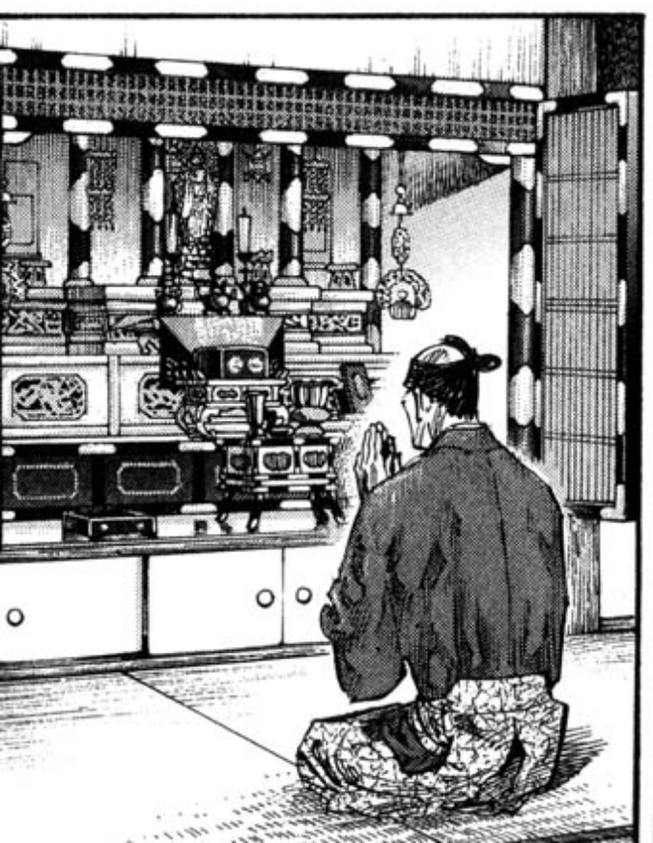
KOUJIRŌ, SIR...
BEFORE DINNER STARTS WE'D LIKE TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR TOMORROW.

THAT'S UEDA'S PLAN.
BUT I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN...
EXCUSE ME.

...

THERE'S NO POINT IN BEING HERE NOW THAT WE KNOW WHAT THEIR INTENTIONS ARE...!
WHAT A LOST OPPORTUNITY...
NO...
MUST ESCAPE.
I HAVE TO GO!
...THE BATHROOM!
EXCUSE ME...
KOJIRŌ ...
WHERE'D HE GO?
KOJIRŌ ?
HUH?
WE'RE LEAVING.

GRRLL



MY FEVER'S GONE.
NOW THAT I'M WELL-RESTED...
DENSHI-CHIRŌ...
ENOUGH, UEDA.
...I'M FEELING REALLY GOOD!
PLEASE FORGET ABOUT THE RŌNIN MIYAMOTO MUSASHI.
UEDA!
WE HAVE FOUND YOUR STAND-IN.

UEDA!
HE WON'T EXIST AS OF TOMORROW.
THUMP

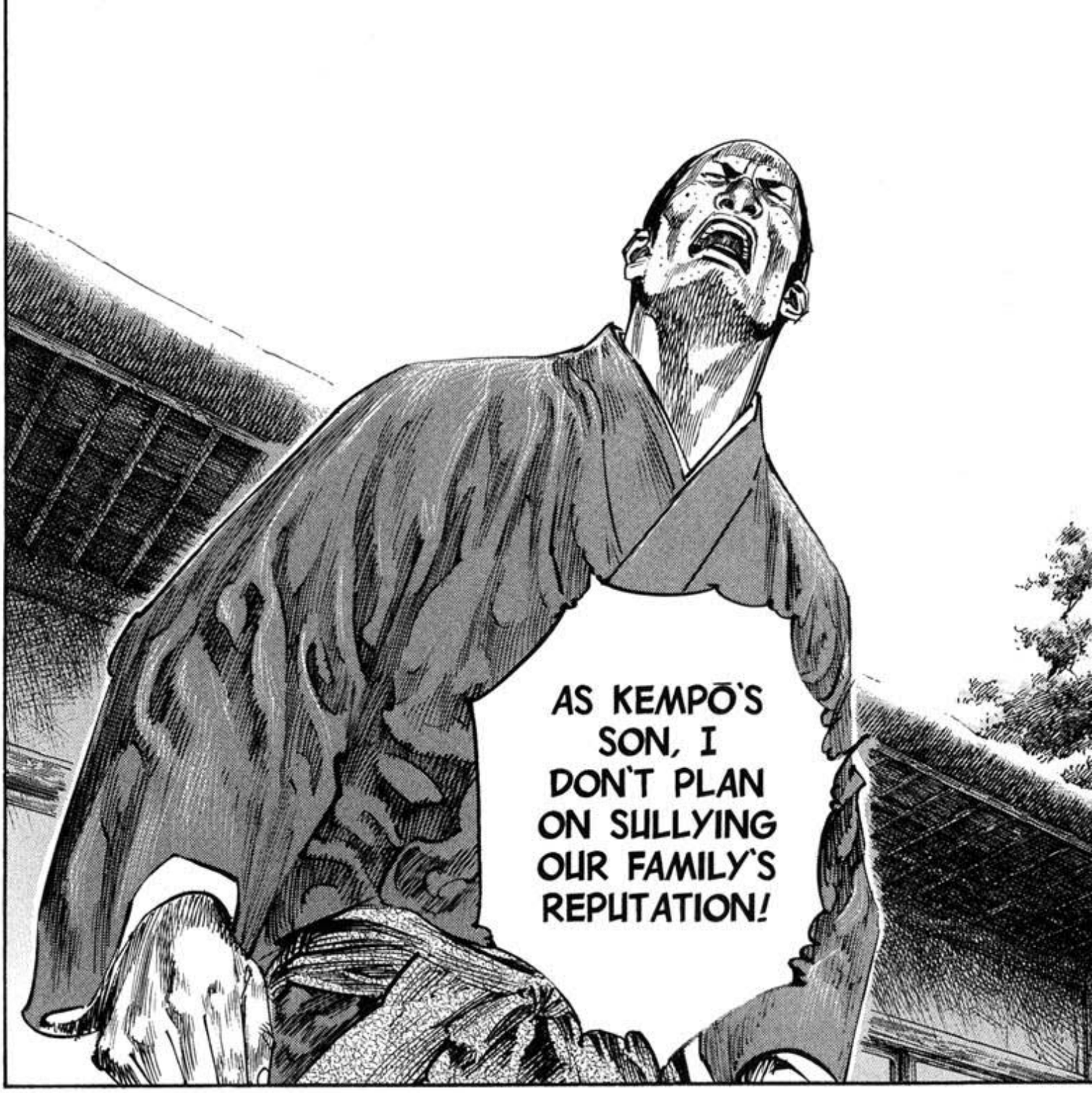
YOU WERE MY TUTOR EVER SINCE I WAS A SMALL CHILD.
WE GREW UP TOGETHER ...

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ME.

URK
!
YAE!

STOP THAT.
NOW COME HERE.

I MADE A PROMISE TO FIGHT MUSASHI...
...IN ONE YEAR'S TIME.
KLAK
I DON'T GO BACK ON MY WORD!
EVEN IF THE STAND-IN WERE A WISER PLAN.
AND THAT'S TOMORROW!


AS KEMPŌ'S SON, I DON'T PLAN ON SULLYING OUR FAMILY'S REPUTATION!

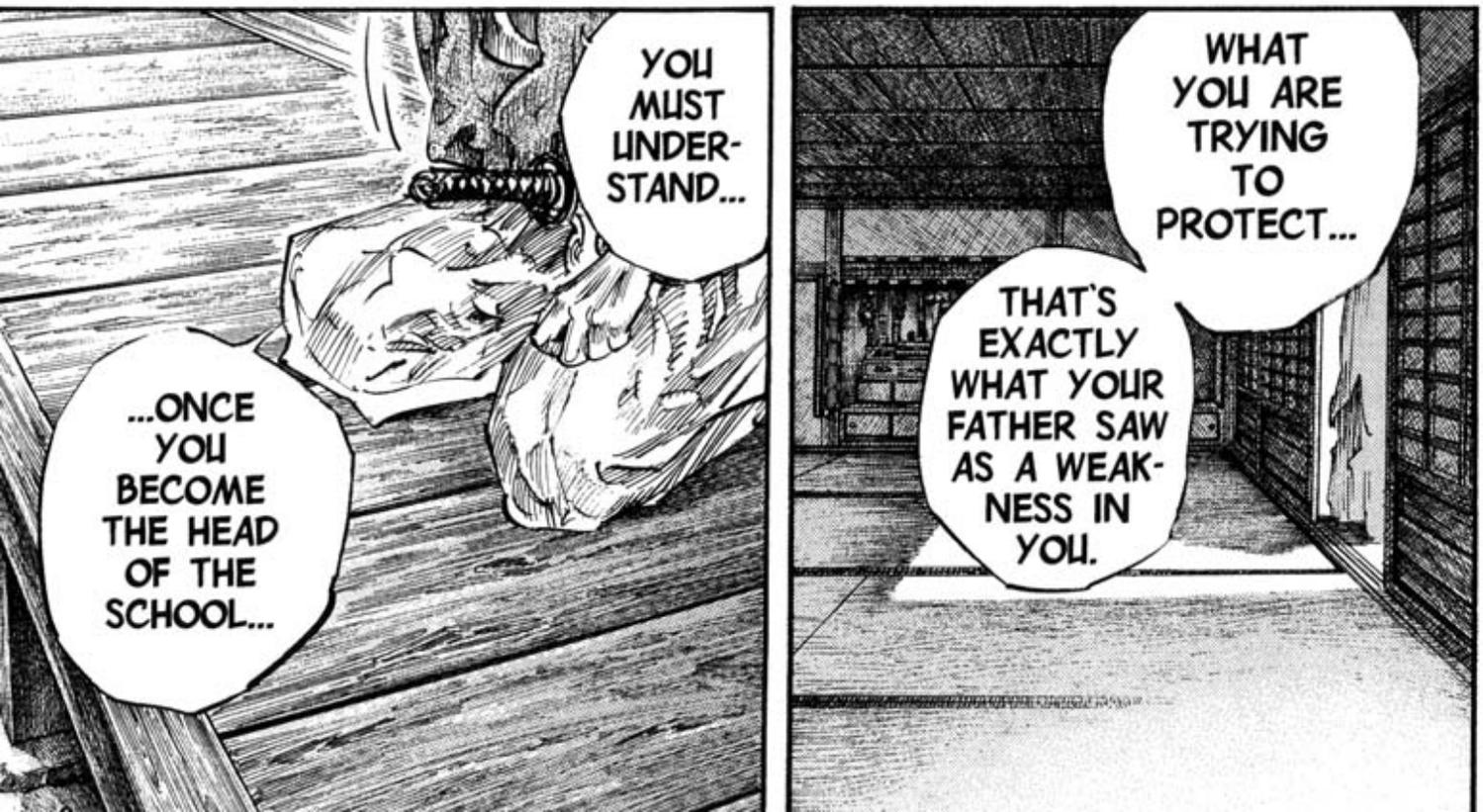
HE WOULD OFTEN REMARK...
...ON HOW HIS SON WAS SO SIMILAR TO HIM-SELF...
AND HE WASN'T REFERRING TO SEIJŪRŌ...

...

DO YOU KNOW WHY KEMPŌ SENSEI DIDN'T CHOOSE YOU TO BE HIS SUCCESSOR?

!
...HE WAS TALKING ABOUT YOU, DENSHI-CHIRŌ.

THAT'S WHY HE DIDN'T CHOOSE YOU.


YOU MUST UNDER-STAND...
...ONCE YOU BECOME THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL...
WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO PROTECT...
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOUR FATHER SAW AS A WEAK-NESS IN YOU.

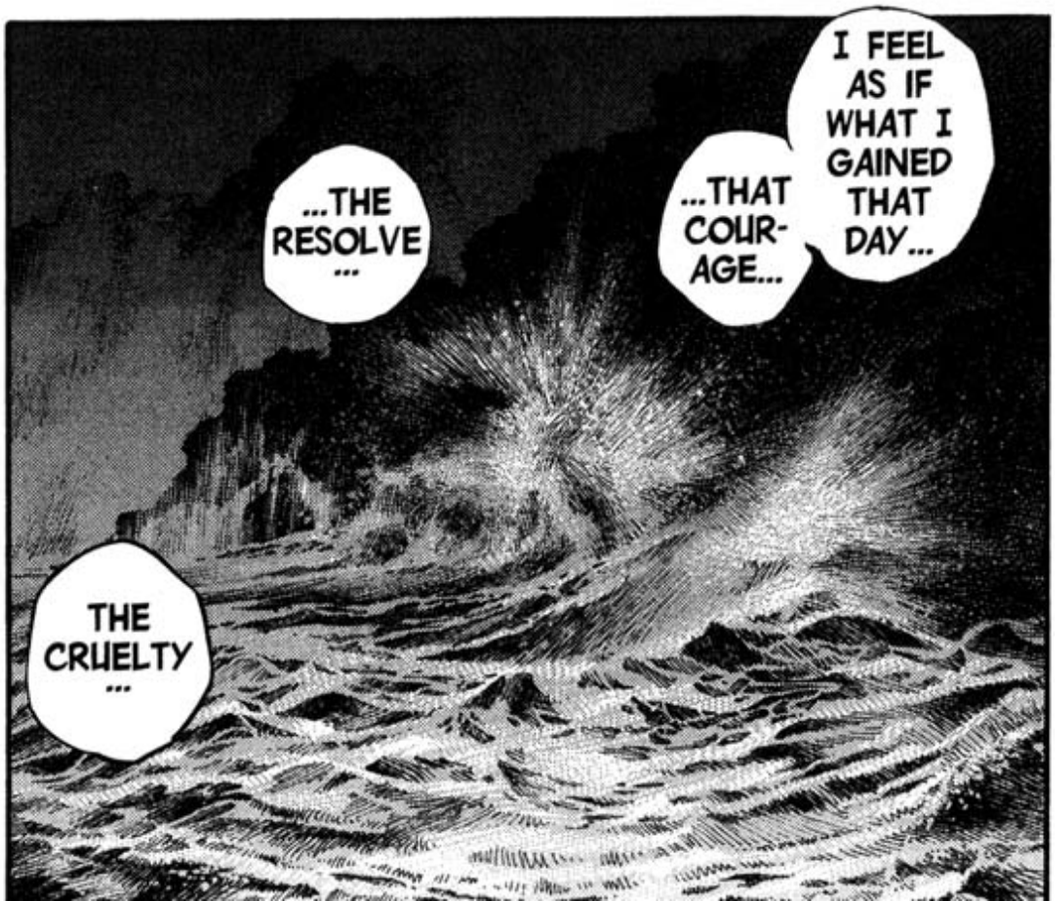
STRAIGHT-
FORWARD
HONESTY
IS NO
VIRTUE!

THE TEN SWORDS-MEN INCLUDING ŌTAGURO ...
...HAVE ALL AGREED.
HE SACRIFICED HIS ARM FOR THE SAKE OF MY TRAINING!
...
WHAT ABOUT ŌTAGURO !?
!!
EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU...?
FOUR YEARS AGO...
...

AND SASAKI KOJIRŌ...

THE BEACH IN THE DARK OF NIGHT.
ITTŌSAI ...

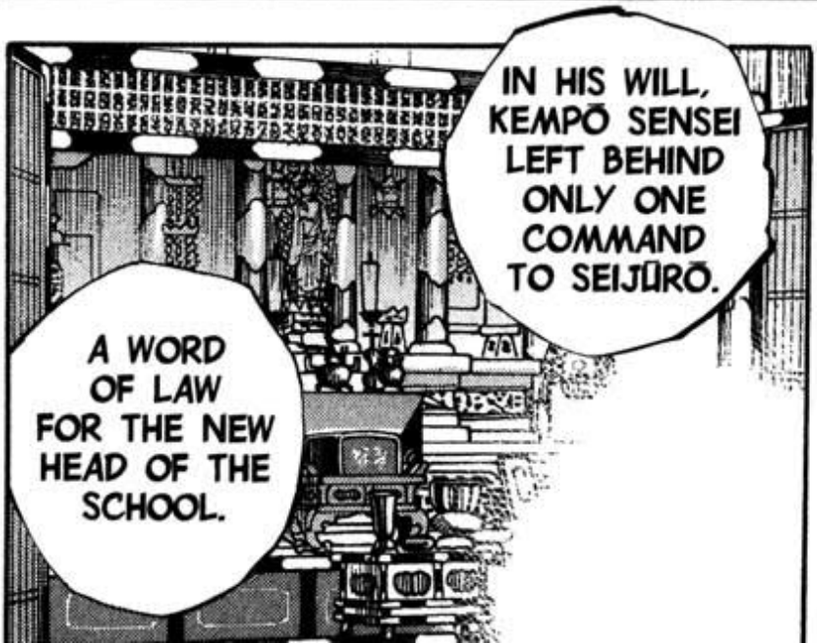
IF I RETURN TO WHO I WAS BEFORE THAT FIGHT.


...THE RESOLVE ...
...THAT COUR-AGE...
I FEEL AS IF WHAT I GAINED THAT DAY...
THE CRUELTY ...

IF I LET THAT HAPPEN EVEN ONCE...

I'LL HAVE TO LET IT ALL GO...
AND I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GET IT BACK.
AND BESIDES ALL THAT...
KRICH

I SHOULD BE THE ONE TO CUT DOWN THE MAN WHO KILLED MY BROTHER.


IN HIS WILL, KEMPŌ SENSEI LEFT BEHIND ONLY ONE COMMAND TO SEIJŪRŌ.
A WORD OF LAW FOR THE NEW HEAD OF THE SCHOOL.

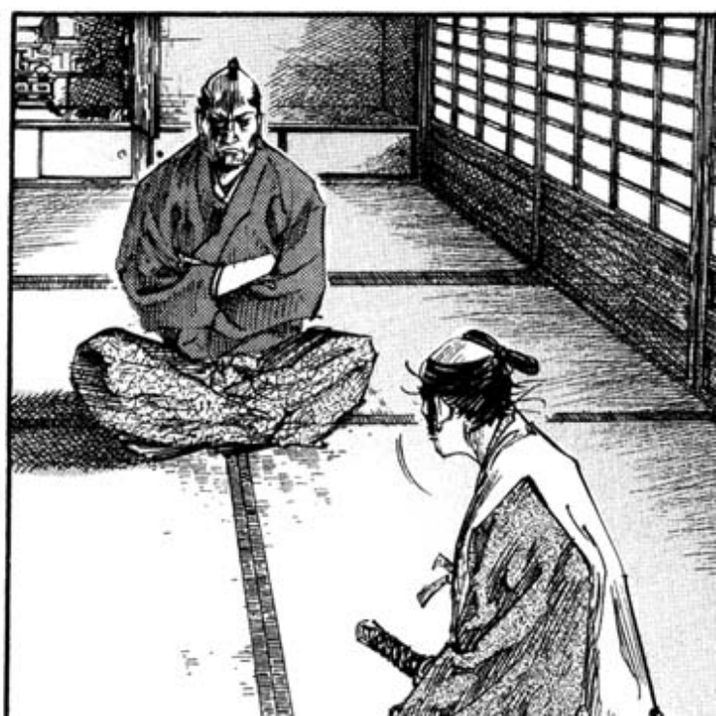
IN THE END, SEIJŪRŌ DIDN'T HEED THAT ADVICE...
.....
"FIGHT ONLY THOSE WHOSE DEFEAT IS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN."
UEDA...
YOU JUST WON'T BUDGE ON THIS, WILL YOU?
VERY WELL...
I'VE NO OTHER CHOICE...
...

I BANISH YOU.

THAT'S MY DECISION AS THE HEAD OF THIS SCHOOL.

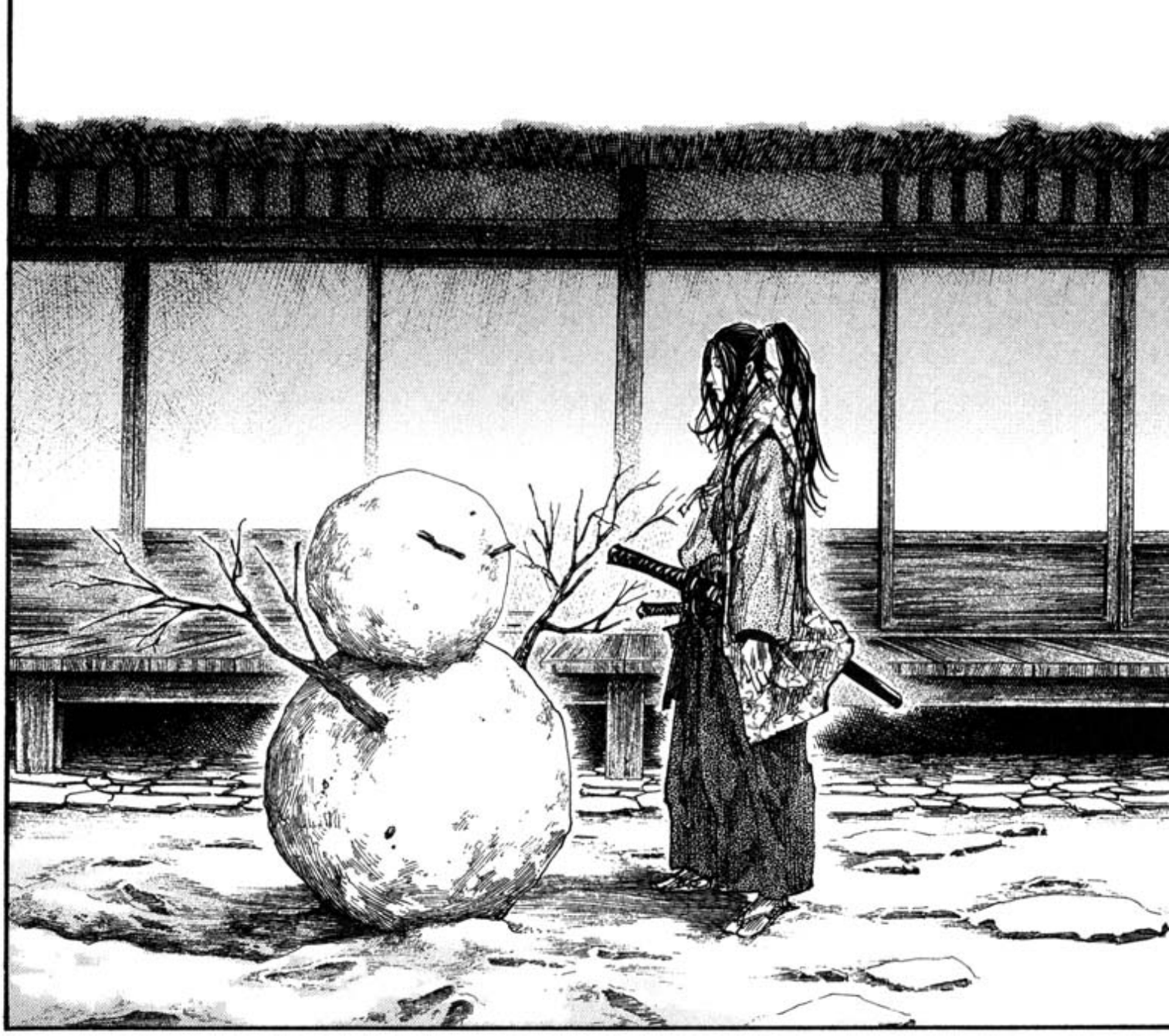
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF YOU AS MY OLDER BROTHER.

UEDA.



FICH
FICH

FICH



AHHHH!

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Critically acclaimed, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts Award for manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. In 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka Award for best manga, and in 2003, Inoue was nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for best writer/artist. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords simultaneously—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this manga are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

A Brief Historical Overview
The *Sengoku* (warring states) period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weak and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the daimyo were constantly at war with each other. One daimyo in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating a federation amongst the daimyo, and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the daimyo from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its 5-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major daimyo from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years. The political stability that resulted put mass numbers of samurai out of work. Masterless samurai, known as *ronin*, were forced to wander the land to seek out employment. This, the beginning of the Edo Period (1600-1868), set the stage for many of the period dramas and *chambara* sword-fighting films that have popularized the image of the samurai to a Western audience.

Hon'ami Koetsu (1558-1637)
Famed artist and calligrapher who co-founded an influential arts movement called the Rinpa School. Koetsu was involved in numerous fields including tea ceremony, pottery, and calligraphy. In addition, Koetsu succeeded the line of his family's ancestral business of sword polishing and appraisals.

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple, which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Ito Ittosai (Dates unknown)
Founder of the Itto-ryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

Rengeoin
Located in eastern Kyoto, Rengeoin Temple is more commonly referred to as Sanjusangendo. The main hall of Rengeoin features an amazing display of 1001 Kannon Buddhist statues.

Sasaki Kojiro (dates unknown)
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi, Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

Shinmen Takezo
Miyamoto Musashi's boyhood name.

Sottaku
A zen term used to describe a disciple and his master in perfect sync when the time is right for the disciple to awaken to enlightenment.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the daimyo. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND*, as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons, who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

Winner of the 2000 Media Arts Festival Award
Recipient of the 2000 Kodansha Award for Best Manga
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